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T W E N T Y
P R A C T I C A L
S E R M O N S

On Several
IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

By the late Reverend and Learned
Mr. WILLIAM MAY.

Published from his own MANUSCRIPTS.

W I T H
A PREFACE, giving a short Account
of his LIFE and CHARACTER.

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LABORATORY SUBJECTS

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15/4/46

— A



THE P R E F A C E.

THE following discourses appear in the world under the disadvantage of their not having been ordered, nor indeed, as far as appears, ever intended, by their author for the public view. And for that reason, as they must want the beauty which his finishing hand would have given them, they will be judged, it is hoped, to have an equal claim with other posthumous publications to the readers candor.

Will an apology be hereupon expected for their being thus published, beyond the author's intention? The following is the only one that can be pleaded; that they are now given up to the repeated warm solicitations of a great number of those that heard them; who earnestly desired an opportunity of reviewing in private some of those instructions, which had given them so much pleasure, and advantage too, when they heard them from the pulpit. With

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which desire of the hearers several other worthy friends of the author heartily concurred; who had long known him and his manner of preaching, and to whose learning and judgment a deference was justly due: who approved the design of this publication, as what would prove no dishonour to his memory, and might be, under the blessing of heaven, of some happy service to the interest of serious piety. To which (if he may be indulged to add any thing from himself) the editor begs leave to add: that if the attentive perusal of them shall give the candid and pious reader any thing of a like pleasure and improvement, with what he hath found in his reviewing them for the press, he is under no apprehension of being censured as too rash or hasty in the publication.

Some few of the discourses contained in this volume are inserted at the particular desire of some who heard them; and who had not forgot, how much they were impressed and affected, when they heard them first delivered. For the choice of the others, the editor must acknowledge himself accountable. And he is the more free to do it, as he hath had a regard in this choice, chiefly to the importance of the subjects, and their aptitude to subserve the interest of

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of our common christianity; to confirm the faith, refine the temper, and better the conduct of those who shall give them a serious attentive reading. And if there are any of the subjects, which at first may appear of a more curious nature, it is hoped, that even these will be found so handled, as to be fitted to answer those most desirable purposes.

They are printed from the author's own copies. — Only, as in composing for the weekly service of the pulpit, some lesser omissions and inaccuracies will be almost unavoidable from the haste of writing, justice to the author's memory required, these should be corrected wherever they appeared. But the same justice no less required, that no real sentiment of the author should be changed, disguised or suppressed: and the reader may be assured, that this hath been every where scrupulously attended to; and indeed, that no lesser alterations have been made, but where they appeared quite necessary.

This is all that was thought needful to be suggested in reference to the discourses now offered to the public.—But it will be probably desired, and expected, that a little more particular account be given of their author, his life and character.

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V. Dr.
Calamy's
continua-
tion, &c.
V. 1.
P. 76.

Mr. WILLIAM MAY was born in LONDON, October 17, 1706. O. S. He was descended from reputable and worthy ancestors. His grandfather was one of those brave confessors for christian liberty and a scriptural worship, (as I hope it may be allowed me to stile them without offence) whom the well-known Act for uniformity in 1662 removed from their stations in the church, or rendered them incapable of service in it. He was not indeed, strictly speaking, ejected by that act, being at that time possessed of no benefice in the church; but he was silenced by it.—He continued however for some years afterwards an occasional preacher, though under many difficulties and discouragements; till the wants of his growing family led him to look out for some supply for them in a way of trade. But, as far as may be judged from the papers he hath left behind him, he was a person of no small furniture, and of good ministerial abilities.

His son, Mr. Samuel May, the father of our author, was bred to trade; and God remarkably prospered and blessed him in it.—I have now before me the account given of him in the sermon preached on occasion of his death, by the reverend Dr. Evans, who had a long intimate acquaintance with him.

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him. The fear of enlarging this preface too far prevents my inserting it at length here. But it appears from thence, that he was distinguished by his solid judgment, uniform and unaffected piety, exemplary patience under most painful and long-continued disorders, his truly christian candor, and extensive liberality. And he had the happiness to have a consort herein like-minded with himself.

It was our author's happiness to be descended from such parents ; and often would he recollect, and mention with gratitude to providence, his many special advantages in their instructions, example and prayers. And soon he showed himself the heir of their virtues, and a follower of their faith and piety. By the blessing of heaven on their faithful care and endeavours, he was brought under very early religious impressions. And the liveliness and seriousness of his spirit gave him, even in that tender age, a peculiar relish for the most close, fervent, and affectionate preaching.

His worthy parents had from the first designed him for the sacred function ; and the religious turn of his mind soon determined him to make it his own choice for himself. And I well remember (as our acquaintance began in the early part of life)

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how

how much his heart appeared set upon the ministry : and how diligent and earnest he was in pursuing the necessary preparatory studies for it ; notwithstanding the peculiar disadvantage under which he then laboured. He had, from very early life, been subject to frequent disorders in his eyes : and these so increased upon him, soon after his father's death, when he was about 14 years of age, that all his friends judged it necessary for him to lay aside his studies ; which he could not pursue without great hazard of losing entirely that most valuable sense. And for a while he thought of yielding to their advice : but his genius still inclined him to learning ; and his piety led him to prefer the ministry to every secular employment, however advantageous. And a kind providence no sooner gave him the unexpected prospect of relief from his threatening disorder, but he cheerfully resumed his purpose of preparing for that work to which he had been devoted.

His academical studies were begun under the direction of the very learned Mr. John Eames, F. R. S. under whose care he continued some years ; and was himself strongly inclined to have finished his studies in the academy, where he began them. But he was over-ruled herein by the advice and repeated

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repeated persuasions of his father's friend and his own, Dr. Evans; to whose judgment of men and things he justly paid a singular deference. He removed therefore about the year 1727 to Taunton, to finish his studies under the tuition of the excellent Mr. Grove: whose instructions and conversation he frequently mentioned with pleasure, as one of the principal blessings of his life. And never, perhaps, was there a closer union of hearts, a higher mutual esteem between tutor and pupil, than appeared between these two worthy persons; and it continued uninterrupted to the close of their lives. Their minds too nearly resembled each other; their governing disposition, their taste for the learned, the polite, the devout was too much the same, not to endear them to each other, as it recommended both to the esteem of all that knew them.

Under the encouragement of this worthy tutor, Mr. May began to preach publicly towards the latter end of the year 1729. And I have that by me which will witness, with what high thoughts of the sacredness and importance of his work, with what lively concern to be accepted of his Master, and useful to souls in it, with what humble apprehensions of himself, and sense of his need of superior help, he entered on that sacred

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sacred service : and his most early labours were universally acceptable wherever he was known.

In the beginning of the year 1730 he was recommended by Dr. Evans to the reverend Mr. Denham, as a person fit to assist him in the service of that large congregation. And he was for some months unresolved what answer to give to the pressing applications made to him from that quarter. It not a little increased his perplexity, that he received at the same time a general and earnest invitation from the numerous congregation at Taunton to assist their aged pastor, Mr. Batson. And his own inclinations were not a little in their favour, as judging there was a prospect of more extensive usefulness in the country. — But a sense of duty, what he owed to a worthy parent in the decline of life, and to a dear and only brother, then just setting out in it, determined him at length for London. He entered on his stated service there in October 1730, and remained in that station for near 25 years, labouring with faithfulness and constancy, and with great acceptance, and usefulness to many.

In the close of the year 1733, he was publicly ordained in the ministerial office in company with the reverend Mr. Edward Williams, and Mr. —Parker ; a circumstance

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stance which is here mentioned only on account of that honourable attestation which was then given by Mr. Denham, and the other ministers who united in the service of that day, to his excellent ministerial abilities and furniture, and to his exemplary character and conduct; as what “ they were assured of, not only from the testimony of “ his most worthy tutor, but also from their “ own knowledge.”

Having thus mentioned that year 1733, I cannot forbear adding, that it proved to him a year of great affliction, of the most severe and repeated trials. Providence thought fit that year to deprive him, first of his excellent and most-tenderly-beloved wife, after a most happy union (but ah! how short a one!) of about 20 months; then of his only child; and not long after that of his only brother: all within the space of about four months.— Trials these, and in so quick a succession, how peculiarly afflictive to one of his tender affectionate make! And they might have overset a mind less under the power of the excellent principles of christianity, than his was. But these taught him *in patience to possess his soul*, and adore his God, and *the Father of mercies, the God of all comfort*, supported and comforted his servant under these his tribulations.

Perhaps

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—Perhaps the reader will not be displeased to read the workings of his mind on this trying occasion ; as he himself expressed them in a letter to an intimate friend, after the death of his child. “ You were witness to my happiness, and therefore can guess at my sorrow. But what then ? Your mixing yours with the general concern upon the occasion only proves my grief too just ; and so cannot plead for the abatement of it.—God hath now weakened me with breach upon breach. My dear little daughter is dead, and was carried yesterday to her mother’s grave.

“ *The father and the husband ! flattering names,*
 “ *That spread his title, and enlarge his share*
 “ *Of common wretchedness !—*

“ It is true, the death of the mother reconciled me to the parting with the child, especially when its death was preceded by a lingering illness.—But still, when the stroke came, it shocked me.—I am now left melancholy and alone ; but there is a better world, where every thing is stable and secure. May you and I learn by all our trials to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ : and follow the captain of our salvation through the
 “ whole

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“ whole field of battle ; and the triumphs
 “ of the other state will make ample amends
 “ for all the hardships sustained during the
 “ whole conflict.”——Hence that natural,
 but striking reflexion in his sermon at the
 beginning of the following year : “ The
 family that at the beginning of this year
 could boast of the honourable names of
 father and mother, the endearing relations of
 brother and sister, or that friend that sticks
 closer than both, are now mourning the
 want of them ; and feel themselves, that
 they have lost them, though they may not
 be missed in the crowd. While the dead
 relation hath been forced to burst all the
 bonds asunder, and knows nothing more of
 the soft and powerful engagement.” (a)

But to return : Providence having fixed
 him in this station of public service, what
 his behaviour in it was, both in public and
 in private, those who enjoyed the benefit of
 his labours will tell with pleasure. I have
 known few ministers, who could more
 justly borrow the words of the apostle, and
 address their hearers with his appeal : *Ye* ^{1 The II. ii.}
are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and ^{10—12.}
iustly, and unblameably we behaved ourselves
amongst you ; as ye know, how we exhorted,
and

(a) Sermons to young people, S. 1. p. 6. first Edit.

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and comforted, and charged every one of you, that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you to his kingdom and Glory.

His work was his pleasure, his heart was in it ; nor did he think much of any pains it cost him. He was truly diligent in his preparations for the pulpit, nor could he allow himself to serve either God or men with that which had cost him nothing. And he always spake as one in earnest, who was himself persuaded, and believed and felt the truths he proposed to others. But what his usual manner of preaching was, how rational, and yet how scriptural and truly evangelical, how judicious, and yet how lively and affectionate, the reader himself will judge from the discourses here put into his hands : which are taken out of a great number he hath left behind him, delivered in the stated course of his ministry. All I shall farther add concerning them shall be, that they all aim at one and the same grand end ; the raising men from *the form to the power of godliness*, the promoting *pure religion and undefiled before God even the Father*, and the forming them to, and improving them in, that holiness of heart and life, which is their necessary preparation for the blessedness of immortality. And these things, it was his settled judgment, could

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could never be pressed upon men with that advantage, as from the principles and motives of christianity. Its distinguishing peculiarities therefore, the atonement of the Redeemer, and the standing influences of the sanctifying Spirit, were truths on which his own soul daily lived ; and they found a frequent place in his public instructions.

But if he any where excelled, it was in prayer. With what propriety, seriousness, and life he led the devotion of the solemn assembly, and at the table of the Lord too, as often as he was called to that service, I have heard many observe with pleasure ; and I make no question, but their souls have often caught the sacred flame from his.

His esteem for the despised cause of non-conformity was the result of judgment and inquiry ; and his adherence to it was steady and uniform, yet free from the allays of bigotry and censoriousness. He looked upon it as not only the cause of liberty, and truth, but as nearly connected also with the interest of practical religion in our land ; a consideration, which always weighed most with him. And yet ever consistent with himself in his regards to it, the liberty he claimed for himself he was as ready to allow to others ; and highly esteemed those of a different

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different communion, and of different sentiments in many points of religious controversy, wherever there appeared a sincere concern for the interest of true piety. He knew no other rule of religion but his bible, no other authority in faith and worship but that of Jesus his Master; and all that loved him in sincerity had, in his account, a title to his affectionate regards.

The rising generation in particular had his most lively affectionate concern. To engage the young on the side of God and religion; to warn them of the snares in their way, to guard them against the dangerous maxims, examples, and customs of a vain and giddy age; to prevail with them to make an early serious surrender of themselves to God through Christ, and openly avow and ratify it at a sacramental table; were things he had constantly at heart. With these views did he often particularly address them in the most striking manner, whenever his subject gave him a fair opportunity of doing it: and he had an annual service immediately designed for their benefit at the entrance of the new year; in which he was but once interrupted, by indisposition, through a course of 24 years.— But some of his discourses on these occasions have been now for many years in the hands
of

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of the public *.—And few persons ever showed themselves more the friends of younger ministers; more tender of their reputation, more solicitous to promote their usefulness.

But his endeavours to serve the interest of serious religion were by no means confined to the pulpit. He equally recommended it by his behaviour out of it. His most agreeable visits among his friends were those which gave him an opportunity of joyning in prayer with them.—His conversation had usually something in it sprightly and entertaining; and it was his care to render it as useful, as it was delightful. Few men possessed in a greater degree the happy art of introducing into the conversation, on proper opportunities, something serious and instructive; or even of warning and reproof too, where he thought it necessary,

* Six of these his *Sermons to young persons* preached on New Year's Days, were first published in 1744, in a small volume in 12mo. Two more were added to the second edition of them in 1753. These, with two single *sermons*, the one on occasion of the marriage of the Princess Royal with the Prince of Orange in 1734: and the other on the much lamented death of his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, in 1751, are all that he printed with his name. Besides which; a *Letter to the Deputies*; another to the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of London, occasioned by Mr. Whitefield's affair in 1739; and the *Family Prayer-Book*, (hereafter to be mentioned) were published without his name. If there were any other pieces of which he was the author, they have not come to my knowledge.

necessary, in an easy, inoffensive, polite, and even agreeable manner. He always loved to represent religion in its own amiable inviting form; and yet in his freest hours he never forgot the christian, or the minister.

Indeed, devotion appears to have been the complexion of his mind. Not a little of his time was spent in communing with his God and his own soul; in reviewing the workings of his heart, and calling himself to a strict account for his conduct in the several scenes he passed through. And he was a most attentive observer of the dealings of divine providence, with reference to himself, his family, his friends, and the public too. The papers which he left behind him, which were very numerous, abounded with remarks of this kind: from which many an agreeable extract had enriched these short memoirs, and presented a striking pattern for our imitation; but that his modesty and prudence ordered them to be destroyed.

As one instance of his love to devotion, and desire to revive the spirit of it in the present age, I am naturally led to mention here, the *Family Prayer-Book*, which he published in the year 1743, for the assistance of those heads of families who might need such helps. He chose to publish it without
his

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his name ; in hopes that, the particular character of the author being unknown, the work might be more generally acceptable and useful to the serious of all denominations. But it hath been long known among his friends, that it was his. And it may be looked on as an evidence of the good acceptance it met with among the judicious and candid of all parties amongst us, that a third edition of it was preparing, and more than half finished, before his death.

In the year 1746, the reverend and learned Mr. George Smyth of Hackney, was removed from our world to a better. And it may be mentioned as none of the least testimonies to our author's merit, that a person of his excellence and judgment declared in confidence to his most intimate friends, how much it was his desire Mr. May might succeed him. And some overtures were accordingly made to him on that head. But his answer put an effectual stop to the taking any farther steps in the affair. He esteemed and loved his friends, amongst whom he had ministred so many years, and that not without success, too well to be easily prevailed upon to leave them ; and therefore, though he had considerably lessened his own personal fortune while employed in their service, he chose to refuse a

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proposal

proposal that would have been considerably to his advantage. But worldly emoluments were the things he least regarded: his temper on all occasions appeared remarkably disinterested, and charitable and generous too; it being found since his death, that a stated proportion of his annual income (and I have reason to believe no inconsiderable one) was constantly devoted to works of charity and piety.

A life on so many accounts truly valuable, his friends could not but desire, and considering his age were ready to flatter themselves, would be continued for many years of growing extensive usefulness. But himself had very different apprehensions of the case; and it appears by the event, that the great Lord of life had determined otherwise. For the last year of his life he dropped many hints to his most intimate friends, as if he expected his stay in this world would not be long: and he frequently complained of those threatening symptoms of various kinds, which not a little alarmed their fears for him. On Saturday May 17, 1755, he found himself early in the morning greatly disordered; yet not to that degree, but that he would endeavour to go on with his preparations for the services of the morrow; and he accordingly pursued them, till he

was

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was no longer able to hold a pen, nor distinctly to see what he had written. And though proper help was immediately called in, and every method of relief was used; yet it soon appeared, that from the moment he was seized with the disorder, he was lost to us: and on the Tuesday evening following he expired, May 20, 1755, in the 49th year of his age.

Two circumstances however relating to the manner of his removal, awful as it was, may be not unworthy of a notice here: the one, that it appears a kind answer of providence to his prayers, frequently repeated, and especially in the latter part of his life: "that he might not out-live his usefulness; that his work and his time might end together;" — the other, that the last act of his life was an act of devotion; he being overheard addressing himself to God in serious prayer, not an hour before his being taken speechless.---How suitable a close of a life such as his had been; a life of which devotion had been the employment, the support and the joy! And it was as suitable a passage to the world he was so soon to enter, a world of the most perfect and sublime devotion.

*Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when Luke xii;
he cometh, shall find so doing.*

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Bridgewater-Square,
Dec. 1, 1756.

J. HODGE.

was no longer a young man, but old
though proper to be in the world, and
in and every respect of right was a man
it from the fact that he was a man
was not a young man, but old
us, and on the other hand, every
he expressed, May 18, 1855, in the
year of his age.
Two circumstances in water, namely to
the number of his personal friends, who
may be not only of a nature, but of
one, that it appears a kind answer to
him, to his present, and to his
and especially in the last part of his life;
as that he might not only be a man
and that his work and his time were not
together, — the other, that the last
of his life was an act of devotion; the being
overhead addressing himself to God in re-
turn for ever, and as he was being
taken up, — the whole of his life of a
the fact as he had been, a life of which
devotion had been the only employment, the
support and the joy. And it was as late
also a passage to the world he was to soon to
enter, a world of the most perfect and sub-
lime devotion.

But it is that feeling, which is the last, which is the
the greatest, which is the last, which is the last.

J. HODGE.

Brigadier General
Dec. 1855.



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SERMON



S E R M O N I.

The great Business of Human Life.

ECCLESIASTES xii. 13.

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.



THUS does Solomon, that wise SERM,
preacher, close his most ex- I.
cellent sermon on the insuffi-
ciency of all kinds of worldly
good to be a compleat hap-
piness for such a creature as
man. His very striking text we have at the
beginning of the first chapter: *Vanity of va- ch. i. 2,
nities, vanity of vanities, all is vanity.* The
B proof

SERM. proof of which he illustrates, by a particular

I. examination of the several schemes which mankind form and pursue to acquire true felicity, and shewing the deceitfulness of them all. And lest he should be censured

as talking rashly, and asserting what he could not make fairly out, he tells us that he delivered, not merely the reasoning of his own mind in a speculative way; but the result of his own long observation, and dear bought experience. And after having proved his important and serious subject to the conviction of every sober and thoughtful mind, the wise man sums up all in this very weighty and instructive inference: *Let us bear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man: or, the whole of man;*

for the word [duty] is not in the original.

ver. 14.

For God (so he adds) shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. Here then my business is,

I. Briefly to explain what is here required of man, when he is called to *fear God and keep his commandments.*— And then,

II. I shall endeavour to prove to you that this fear and obedience is *the whole of man.*

I. Let

The great business of human life.

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SERM.

I.

I. Let me briefly explain what is here required of man, when he is called, in my text, to *fear God and keep his commandments*. Expressions these are which are very common and well known among us. —The *Fear of God*, which is so frequently insisted on, and urged, through the whole book of God, has been often observed to stand there, in some places, for some eminent branch of true religion, and in others, for the whole of it. This true fear of God, according to the scripture account of it, implies, “an inward habitual awe and reverence of God, as the supremely excellent and most perfectly holy and glorious Being; and under this character, as our Observer, Lord, and Judge.” —Hereupon such a fear and reverence of God will make us dread his displeasure as the greatest evil, and induce us therefore, with the utmost care to avoid every thing that may justly expose us to his anger; and on the other hand, excite in us an earnest desire, and endeavour to do every thing that will recommend us to the approbation and special favour of this God: who is not a mere arbitrary tyrant, but the infinitely wise, righteous, and good, moral governour of the world. And therefore, it is added in the text: *Fear God, and keep*

SERM. *his commandments*, i. e. "Show that you

I. "have *that fear of God*, which alone is

"true and genuine, by *keeping his com-*

"*mandments*; by having such a respect to

"every one of them, as to govern your

"heart, and direct the whole of your life

"and conversation by them." Such an

obedience is the natural result of this true

fear of God; and where that is wanting,

all professions of fear and reverence are vain

and hypocritical. — Thus, therefore, God

reasons most justly with his people of old:

Malachi
i. 6.

If I be Father, where is mine honour? and if

I be a master, where is my fear? For a son

honoureth his father, and a servant his master.

How does a son honour his father? why;

by bearing constantly on his mind a grate-

ful sense of his obligations to his father, by

reverencing his authority, discovering in his

whole conduct an unwillingness to offend

him, and a cheerful readiness to practice all

his commands, without disputing or ques-

tioning the propriety of them. And how

does a servant honour his master? but by

obeying his commands, and doing all he

requires of him with diligence and fidelity?

Just so, ought men to show that they truly

fear God.

So that, upon the whole, what is here

required of men in my text, is *true religion*;

or the constant, steady, persevering practice

of

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of universal piety and virtue : piety towards SERM.
God in all its branches, discovering itself I.
in the exercises of devotion, and worship of
him, in a reverential love, and study to
please him ; and virtue towards men, pro-
ceeding from piety, and a religious regard
towards God.—This is true religion: which
does not consist in a mere observance of
outward forms and ceremonies, in talk and
show, in vain disputes, and noisy wrang-
lings ; but in a heart brought to a sincere,
humble devotedness to God, a soul formed
into a godlike nature, and employing itself
in the practice of all those duties and vir-
tues, and complying with all those means,
which God has appointed, and which will
strengthen and improve the divine life with-
in, till it grow up to full maturity and per-
fection.

I now proceed to the principal thing to
be here enlarged on, and that is to prove to
you,

II. That *this fearing God, and keeping his
commandments*, or a life of true serious prac-
tical religion, is the *whole of man*. The
whole of his duty, his happiness, and there-
fore of his truest wisdom.

I. *Fearing God*, and showing that fear
by *keeping all his commandments* is the
whole duty of man. This my text, as we
render it, expressly declares. His whole duty

SERM. above all his work and labour, and toil under the sun. That which is his chief service, his principal most important business, and to which he is most strongly obliged, by his nature, his relations, his condition and circumstances in life.

I. Man, as a rational free being, is the subject of moral government; and as this is the peculiar excellence of his nature, that is a sufficient proof, that the Author of his nature designed him for such government. To such a creature as man then belongs moral duty:—duty to God under all those relations in which he stands to him; and not to God only, but to himself also, and to all beings of the same nature with him, and under the same obligations.— If then there should be any express rule made known by God to mankind, the observing of which will both direct and secure the performance of this duty; that may justly be stiled the universal rule or law of duty to man. Such a rule is that in the text: *Fear God and keep his commandments*; or, show the true fear of God by an hearty universal obedience. Such a temper and conduct, from such a principle, is the whole of what is required.

And it may be worth our while to take particular notice here, that there is no one branch of duty, however distinguished or diversified, but is either included in this rule,

or

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or deducible from it; whether it relate to SERM.
God, to man himself, or his neighbour. I.

If we consider our duty as more immediately respecting God himself; and particularly as requiring from us acts of solemn worship and devotion: it is this holy reverential fear of him which at once engages the heart and mind in the work, and makes it always serious, humble, and lively; that fixes the attention, and raises all the affections of the soul.—Again, Is it our duty to regard God as our sovereign and ruler? It is the very nature of this fear to dispose and form the soul to an entire subjection both to his all-wise commands, and his disposing will.—Are we indispensibly required to love the Lord our God, with all the heart, and soul, and mind, and strength? Why this fear of him is so far from being inconsistent with such a love, that these two leading passions are mutually helpful to the strengthening of each other.—Or does our duty to God call us out sometimes to great difficulties and severe trials of our obedience; nay, to part with life itself, rather than prove unfaithful to this mighty Lord? Here also this true fear of God, the dread of his displeasure and its awful effects, will engage us to obey the most difficult commands, and to *resist* without repining *even unto blood*, Heb. xii.
striving against sin; and not to reckon our lives 4. Acts xx.

SERM. *dear to our selves; so that we may finish our*
 I. *course of obedience with joy.*

Nay farther, if we take an account of our duty from the gospel, i. e. as discovered to us by Jesus the mediator; this fear of God will comprehend the whole of our duty even in this view. For as that naturally leads to regard every intimation of the mind and will of God, in whatever way he makes it known; so it will engage us to attend to the evidence given of his having spoken to mankind in these last days by his son, and to obey this commandment, that we believe in the name of the son of God, that so we may obtain eternal life through his name.

1 Jo. iii.
23.

And then, this fear of God, as implying obedience, will engage to the performance of the whole of our duty to our fellow creatures.—Various are the duties which arise to mankind from the various relations they stand in to one another; whether as united in the nearest bonds of nature, or in social and civil life: such as husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, friends, rulers and subjects, &c.—Now this fear of God, or in other words, the principle of true religion, and that alone, will direct to the uniform, steady performance of all these several duties.

Lastly:

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Lastly: This expression in the text includes **SERM.**
the whole of our duty to ourselves also. In **I.**
as much as this obediential fear of God, or
true religion, especially as practised accord-
ing to the discovery of the gospel, *will teach* **Tit. ii.**
us to deny all ungodliness, and worldly lusts, **12.**
and to live soberly, as well as righteously, and
godly in the world. It will direct us in every
part of self-government, in bringing the
bodily appetites and passions into an ha-
bitual subjection; and will influence all the
thoughts and inclinations of the heart. This
will teach us *so to use the world*, both in its **1 Cor. vii.**
businesses, and lawful pleasures, *as not to* **31.**
abuse it; nay, will enable us *to take up our* **Mat. xvi.**
cross and follow Jesus, the captain of our **24.**
salvation, whithersoever he leads us.

Thus far then we see the conclusion of the
whole matter; that *fearing God and keeping*
his commandments, is the whole duty of man.
Since there can be no kind of duty incum-
bent on any man, arising from his relation
to God, to others, or with respect to him-
self, but what is summed up in this, or ne-
cessarily flows from it. And whatever may
be required of men by their fellow creatures
which is inconsistent with this, or contrary
to it, is so far from duty, that it becomes
sin.—I now proceed,

II. To prove, that the *Fearing God, and*
keeping his commandments, is the whole of
man's

SERM. *man's happiness*, as well as of his *duty*. And

I. therefore his happiness, because his duty ; as

it is also his duty, because it secures his whole happiness, or the happiness of his whole nature.—This is, and has been from the beginning, the great inquiry of mankind :

“ Where is happiness to be found, and

“ where is the place of true solid satisfac-

“ tion ? What is that chief good for such

Eccl. vi. “ a being as *man in this life, all the days of*

12. “ *his vain life which he liveth as a shadow ?*

“ And what will make him supremely and

“ for ever happy as a rational immortal

“ creature beyond the grave ?” This, what-

ever it be, the *fearing God, and keeping his*

commandments, or the practice of true reli-

gion, and nothing else, will certainly procure.

And this will easily appear. For,

1. What is the best good for man in the

present life ? It must be something that can

approve itself to his better, his reasonable

part. And as this cannot be any thing of a

material nature, but something of a nobler

and spiritual kind ; so it must come from

God the Father of spirits. From him alone

must the happiness for a human soul be de-

rived ; because He is the great all in all,

the all-sufficient fountain of good, and in

him all our springs are. And what must

this be, but a sense of his special favour

and love, and the special communica-

tions

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tions of it to the soul, in every state and SERM.
condition of life to the end? Here is the I.
great and only true happiness of man even
on earth. "To converse and transact af-
fairs that relate to this life; and yet to
think, that I have something nobler and
more excellent that engages my principal
attention! To take a double relish in the
comforts and enjoyments of this life;
and yet to find, I have a greater and
more entertaining delight in conversing
with my God, and maintaining a holy
intercourse with the Father of spirits!
To be able to trust in him amidst all the
folly and vanity of a perverse world;
and look to him as my almighty friend!
When clouds and darkness veil these
lower skies, and storms and tempests
blow around me, and every inferior ob-
ject wears a gloomy appearance; then to
live easy, contented, and chearful under
the light of his countenance! --- this cer-
tainly must be the greatest blessing that I
can possibly enjoy below." And this hap-
piness the *fear of God*, and discovering that
fear by *keeping his commandments*, or the stea-
dy practice of true religion will secure; but
nothing besides, nothing short of it. For as
God is eminently the *righteous* most holy
Lord, so he can *love* with complacency and Pf. xi. 7.
delight, nothing but *righteousness*; and
there

SERM. therefore, the light of his countenance can
 I. shine with friendly chearing beams upon
 none but the righteous, i. e. such as are
 truly and sincerely good, and have respect
 to every one of his righteous precepts to do
 them.

Nothing, but a right conduct from true
 principles, can afford matter for sober
 comfortable reflections. But who can tell the
 pleasure that springs up in the soul, where-
 ever such reflections are found? Who can
 express the pleasure that arises from reflect-
 ing on a good, beneficent action? How un-
 speakably great and noble the satisfaction
 and pleasure that arises from the exercises
 of a lively devotion? from devout adora-
 tion, humble prayer and praise, and trust
 in infinite perfection? What pleasing satis-
 faction in a ready chearful yielding to the
 divine will, in frequent solemn surrenders of
 ourselves to God, with all our concerns for
 all future time, and a steady hope in his
 mercy! How manly the delight that springs
 from resisting and opposing temptations,
 combating unruly passions and desires, and
 going on, conquering and to conquer in the
 spiritual warfare? What solid peace must
 inhabit that mind, as its most proper dwel-
 ling, where the *peace of God that passeth all*
understanding is communicated?

Phil. iv.

In consequence of this, this true religion,
 which brings in such true solid satisfaction

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to the mind of man, is a proper ballast for SERM.
it amidst all the fluctuations and tossings of I.
this tempestuous sea on which we roll. 
Innumerable unforeseen accidents may lay
waste the largest substance. *Riches* may
suddenly *make to themselves wings*, and flee Prov.
away as an eagle towards heaven. xxiii. 5. Mortal
friends may grow cold, and at length abandon,
if not despise us. But if we yet continue to
fear God and keep his commandments;
if our religion lives in us, and shows itself
in our lives and conversations, this will secure
a happiness to us, which the world can
neither give nor take away.

And therefore will religion afford us the
truest happiness in this life, because it will
administer it to the end of life, and even in
dying. The sickness of the body does not
wholly interrupt the sense of the divine favour,
nor can it hinder the communications of it to the
soul; nor shall the dropping of the body destroy
it. When *flesh* Pf. lxxiii.
and heart are failing, the truly religious 26.
man's *God is the strength of his heart*; and
the prospect, the well-grounded hope, thro'
grace, that this same God, his all-sufficient
good, will be his *portion for ever*, must fill
him with a joy unspeakable, and full of
glory. *This hope he has laid up*, or fastened, as Heb. vi.
an anchor within the vail, sure and stedfast; 19, 20.
whither Jesus the forerunner is already enter'd.
Such

SERM. Such is the happiness which true practical

I. religion affords to man in this life, and even
 to the end of it; the greatest that possibly
 can be here enjoyed.

2. This *fearing God, and keeping his commandments*, will secure the happiness of the whole man in the future, eternal state of things. That, indeed, will be the same in kind with what the religious man possesses here, though more perfect in its degree.—Here the favour of God is esteemed by him as his life, and the sense of *his loving-kindness* shed abroad in his heart *better than life*, with all its joys; and the satisfaction that arises from it in the soul is great and unspeakable.—But still, through the weakness, frailty, and imperfection of the present state, the enjoyment of this best good is but in part, and liable to some interruptions. There must therefore be another, a nobler, an eternal world, where these communications shall be enjoyed to the full, and for ever. And when the good man shall be introduced into that glorious state, and delivered from the bondage of corruption, and from all the weakness and remainders of imperfection that attend this distant one; he will enjoy a perfection of his noblest powers and faculties, a perfectly clarified understanding, perfect knowledge, and perfect love. And these engaged on the
 most

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most perfectly excellent and amiable object ; SERM.
with the immediate most full, and grand I.
communications from him of knowledge, 
love, and joy ; and a security of enjoying
all this unchangeably, even to eternity : ---
this surely must be the supreme happiness
of man, beyond which he cannot form a
wish, or stretch a thought.—And to this
will the obediential fear of God finally lead ;
in this will it terminate.—This will be the
effect from the nature of true religion it-
self, and from the special promise of God
it will be the reward of it.

1.) This will be the effect of *fearing God,*
and keeping his commandments, from the
nature of the thing itself. It prepares and
forms the soul for blessedness. Perfecting
holiness in the fear of God, is only its grow-
ing more and more into a likeness and re-
semblance of him in that which is his own
greatest excellence and glory. And the
more any one thus resembles him, the more
must he partake of that satisfaction which
is inseparable from it. And therefore, when
that likeness is perfect in the heavenly world,
the most exalted satisfaction and felicity must
necessarily flow from it ; and the communi-
cations of divine love will flow to it in the
strongest currents.—The life of God in the
soul of man naturally tends towards the per-
fection of its kind ; which it can never reach
till

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SERM. till it advance him into the immediate pre-

I. *sence of God, where there is a fulness of joy.*— In short, the temper of heaven is reverential love; and the work and business of heaven is expressing that fear and love by perfect, never-ceasing, and most joyful obedience. And when the soul is, by living such a life now, trained up, and made meet for that work and felicity; can it be supposed, that God will frustrate all those desires which are inkindled in such a soul by his own spirit, and all those tendencies of the divine nature to its own noblest perfection, by destroying of it? It is impossible. No; as surely as the soul has this growing tendency for the compleat happiness of its nature, and meetness for it, so surely shall it, in God's due time, be put into the compleat and everlasting fruition of it.—But then,

2.) We have also the promise of God, that this *fearing him and keeping his commandments* shall be thus rewarded. This is what the Lord hath said to mankind, through every generation from the beginning down to this: "Obey me, and thou shalt live." Therefore it is said frequently in scripture:

Psal. ciii. *The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on them that fear him, and on those that keep his commandments to do them. They that fear the name of the Lord, and think upon*

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upon it so as to walk in his ways, *they shall be* SERM.
mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in the day I.
when I make up my jewels. And in the last
chapter of the new testament it is thus ex-
pressed: *Blessed are they which do his com-*
mandments, that they may have a right to the
tree of life, right (though not of proper
merit, yet) according to the gracious cove-
nant of God, and his faithful promise; and ^{Rev. xxii,}
may enter in through the gates, (i. e. the right ^{14.}
and only proper way of gaining admission)
into the heavenly city.

I add under this head, that to assure
mankind by the Gospel, that *Fearing God and*
keeping his commandments is the whole of man;
of his happiness hereafter, as well as on
earth: God has promised, through his dear
Son, that those who fear and obey him, shall
not only obtain the perfect everlasting felicity
of their souls, but that of their bodies also.
These, after their having been humbled to
corruption and dust in the grave, shall be
raised in glory and honour, and re-united
with the perfected spirit, as a most proper
medium of communicating to it greater plea-
sures. Such a friend is christianity to human
nature, that its concern reaches even to the
more ignoble part, the body; and not on-
ly to its best estate, during this life, but to
its recovery from all the dishonours of the
grave, to glory, and honour, and immor-
tality.

SERM. *ality.* And that mankind might believe

I. *this concern, which the gospel discovers,*
 to be real and sincere : it shows us the Son
 of God cloathed with a body of flesh, dying
 in that body, and rising in it himself from
 the grave, and ascending in it to the most
 excellent glory, and living there at the
 right hand of God the Father, and to come
 from thence, to raise up all, by his divine
 voice ; *those who have done good, to the resur-*
rection of life, and those who have done evil,
to the resurrection of damnation.

Jo. v. 28,
29.

This then again is the *conclusion of the*
whole matter : that vice and immorality lead
 on to destruction, and final everlasting de-
 spair ; that those worldly possessions, and
 enjoyments, which though reckoned inno-
 cent in themselves, idolized by the ge-
 nerality of mankind, and, as they think, bid
 fairest to satisfying the eager heart, are still
 unsatisfactory and vain, and all their preten-
 sions vanish like the giving up of the ghost ;
 that *the world passeth away, and the lusts*
thereof : but he that doeth the will of God a-
bideth for ever.

1 Jo. ii.
17.

And now, from all that has been said,

III. It will be most easy to show, that
 this *fearing God, and keeping his command-*
ments, is the whole of man's wisdom ; that
 wisdom which is the principal thing, and
 without which a man will perish in the
 error

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error of his way, and in his end shall be SERM.
a fool. I.

And this will most evidently appear to an unprejudiced mind, if we will but think a little, what is true wisdom, and wherein it does consist. And this the sober reasoning of our own minds will easily teach us: viz. "That true wisdom consists in
" proposing the most worthy end, and in
" pursuing the best means to obtain it." The best end which man can possibly propose to himself is that of the happiness of his whole nature; as a reasonable immortal being; and the means which true wisdom proposes to that end are such, which naturally tend to promote that happiness in this world, and by their right use lead on to, and prepare for, the compleat and everlasting enjoyment of it hereafter.

Now as this is the conclusion of Solomon's sermon in this instructive book, that this obediential fear of the great God, or true religion, is the whole of man, and that therein he shows his best wisdom, and soundest understanding; the most proper way of judging of the justness of such an inference, is, to trace it from the body of the discourse, and consider how far it will hold. To this purpose, let us look a little back, and see what Solomon says about wisdom, and the pursuits of it. And his guidance we may safely follow, his ob-
servations

SERM. fervations we may safely depend on the
 I. justness of, because his was an extraordinary wisdom, as the gift of God to him.

He informs us then, that *he gave his*
 c. i. 13, *heart to search out wisdom, and to know wis-*
 17. *dom.*—By wisdom, here, we may understand the various kinds of what with men is accounted wisdom; such as the knowledge of the works of nature, of arts and sciences; and, (what is generally reckoned the truest wisdom of this world) the knowledge of men and things, skill and dexterity in business, prudence and forecast in the management of our affairs; and, especially, a great sagacity in politics. But let us now hear the conclusion of the
 c. i. 13, *whole matter as to these several sorts of wis-*
 14. *dom.* It is this: *I gave my heart to seek out by wisdom, concerning all things that are done under heaven. This sore travel hath God given unto man to be exercised therewith. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun, and behold all is vanity, and vexation of spirit.*—Well, but is not wisdom to be found by searching into sensual pleasure? Or is not wisdom to be rewarded by such
 c. i. 16. enjoyments? Let us read on:—*I communed with my own heart, saying, Lo I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. Therefore, to*
 improve

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Improve it and to add to its stock, and, with SERM.
that, to assist my judgment of true happiness, I.
I said in mine heart : Go to now, I will prove
thee with mirth ; therefore enjoy pleasure : and
lo this also is vanity. I said of laughter : It is
mad ; and of mirth : What doth it ? I sought
in mine heart to give myself to wine, (yet ac-
quainting my heart with wisdom) and to lay
hold on folly, till I might see what was that
good for the sons of men, which they should
do under heaven all the days of their life.
I made me great works.—So I was great, and
increased more than all that were before me in
Jerusalem ; also my wisdom remained with me.
And whatsoever mine eyes desired, I kept not
from them. I withheld not my heart from any
joy. Then I looked on all the works which my
hands had wrought, and all the labour that I
had laboured to do : and behold all was vanity
and vexation of spirit ; and there was no pro-
fit under the sun. — Again, as to business
and worldly affairs ; when I applied mine
heart to know that kind of wisdom (says
he) to see the business that is done upon the
earth (for also there is that neither night nor
day, seeth sleep with his eyes ;) then I beheld
all the work of God, that a man cannot find
out the work that is done under the sun : be-
cause though a man labour to seek it out, yet
he shall not find it ; yea, farther, though a
wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be

Chap. ii.
ver. 1.

ver. 9.

Ch. vii.
16, 17.

SERM. *able to find it.* — Nay, lastly, as to the inquiries of the mind into learning, he declares, in this chapter where the text is :

I. *Moreover, by these, my son, be admonished ; of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness to the flesh.* — So that, upon the whole, as to wisdom, and the search for it in the things of this world, in order for true happiness, it will be found, from the disappointed experiments made on this account, that *in much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.*

c. i. 18.

Job

xxviii. 14.

ver. 20.

—28.

Where then is this true and best wisdom for man to be found ? *The deep* (as Job elegantly expresses it) *saith : It is not in me ; the sea saith : It is not in me. It cannot be gotten for gold, even the most fine gold ; neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. No mention shall be made of precious stones, seeing the price is above rubies.* — *Whence then cometh wisdom ? and where is the place of understanding ?* *Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living ? Destruction and death say : We have heard the fame of it with our ears. God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof. For he looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven ; to make the weight for the winds, and he weigheth the waters by measure. And then, when he made a decree for*

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for the rain, and a way for the lightning of SERM.
the thunder ; then did he see it, and declare I.
it, he prepared it, yea, and searched it out. 
And unto man he said : Behold, the fear of the
Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil
is understanding." (a)

C 4

And

(a) And here, upon this passage, in connection with its Peters on context, I cannot omit the mention of a very ingenious Job. conjecture of a critical writer on this chapter.

p. 456.

"Unto man, God said—What man is that, but Adam 457.
"himself? (so the Hebrew word may be rendered a proper name :) for, from the circumstances, it seems that
"Adam, and no other, can be meant.—We have here
"then a record of something spoken to the first man,
"not to be met with in the book of Genesis. But,
"whether spoken to him before, or after his fall, is
"not so easy to determine. If after the fall, the words
"carry in them a reproof, as well as an instruction, highly
"seasonable, and suited to the circumstances of our unhappy progenitor. As if God had said to him: You,
"who in defiance of my prohibition, have been seeking
"after another sort of wisdom and knowledge than was
"proper for you; go, learn from sure experience, that
"your truest wisdom is to fear me, and to pay an absolute
"obedience to my commands.—And hence we may observe, how aptly *destruction and death* are (ver. 22.)
"made the conveyers of this great truth from Adam down
"to his posterity; since it was the disobedience of our first
"parents that brought death into the world; and every instance of mortality therefore would naturally recall to
"the minds of them, and their descendants, the history of
"the fall, and read them a new lesson of obedience."

Once more,

"I might (saith he) observe further, that, if the opinion
"of learned men be well grounded, that there was neither
"rain nor thunder before the sin and fall of our first parents; then here is another particular which seems to
"show

SERM. And now I have finished the proof of

I. this plain proposition advanced in my text:
Fearing God, and keeping his commandments, is the whole of man.

What remains then, but that each of us, both young and elder, resolve, that, by the grace of God, (which is never denied to those who sincerely ask it) whatever has been our past conduct, we will, from this day forward, make this the great concern and business of our life; and become truly religious, if ever we would be truly happy, both in time, and to eternity?—I have often thought, with concern, when we look over our congregations, and into the world of professors, and observe the prevailing course of behaviour of many of them, that they behave as if they believed there were two sorts of religion: one for the days of health and vigour, and another for a time of sickness, and an hour of death.

The

“ show that this admonition to Adam was given after the
 “ fall: For God is said to give it (ver. 26.) *when he made*
 “ *a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning and*
 “ *the thunder.* And if he was pleased to accompany it
 “ with a display of his thunder in all its terrors, and this
 “ was the first time that Adam heard those awful sounds;
 “ what an impression must it make upon his heart? And
 “ how could he chuse but remember it himself, and trans-
 “ mit it with care to his posterity! And we have some
 “ reason to think, that this might be the case, as the law
 “ was, afterwards, delivered from mount Sinai with the
 “ same solemnity.”

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The former that which, they persuade them-
selves, will consist with any liberties they
may think proper to take, and all the indul-
gences to vain delights, if not sinful plea-
sures; a religion, the whole of which, as
to God, is to consist in paying him now and
then a complimentary visit in his house, ra-
ther than be quite out of the fashion, and
now and then filling up a few minutes of
some waste hour of life, with a cold, shat-
tered, and broken prayer; but not to go
much farther, lest it should make a person
unmannerly and singular, unfit for good
company, and endanger their *being righteous* Eccl. vii.
over much. 16. But the religion for sickness and
death is that strict consistent one which was
before despised: A heart under the influ-
ence of prevailing holiness, and a devout
temper; and a meetness for heaven, as a
state of perfect purity. Then, when all
disguises are taken off; then, when con-
science is thoroughly roused, and not stupa-
fied by false principles; men will be glad to
have the comforts of true religion, though
they had never taken any pains for it. Then,
when death stares them in the face, this
will be the language of an awakened mind,
uttered with quivering lips, with a faulter-
ing tongue, and a breaking heart: *O let me*
die the death of the righteous! and let my last
end be like his! Num. xxiii. 10. But you cannot have these
con-

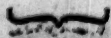
SERM. consolations of true religion at last, if you
 I. have lived inconsistent with the character of
 the truly righteous before ; your false peace
 and vain expectations must then all vanish
 at the giving up the ghost.—Let none of us
 then deceive our selves ; but let us set out,
 and practice through life with only one set
 of principles, which shall bear us up, and
 enable us to maintain our integrity to the
 end, and to *finish our course with joy.*

Acts xx.
 24.

And as for those who have been for some
 years wearying themselves in the greatness
 of their way ; let them tell us, what is the
 conclusion of the whole matter, as they
 have found it ; and whether the reflexion
 of the wise man is not most just and sober-
 ly true. Does not your endeavour and la-
 bour to *heap up riches, and not knowing who*
shall gather them, bespeak aloud the vanity
 of your undertakings ? Let the wrinkles and
 furrows speak your past care, and your ha-
 ving spent your strength for that which will
 not profit. Let the surfeit of past indulgen-
 ces, and the insipidness of past pleasures,—
 let the baffles and disappointments you have
 met with as to your expectations from mor-
 tal good convince you, that religion is your
 principal concern, your only way to true
 happiness. And let us all apply our hearts
 to this divine instruction.

Pf. xxxix.
 6.

And

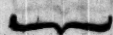
And lest this experience and reflexion of SERM.
Solomon should be slighted, because it was I.
delivered so long ago ; I beg leave to conclude 
this sermon with the later testimony of an ex-
cellent Prelate, who died but in the last reign.
The passage is the close of his history of his
life and times. In which words he desires
that we would consider him not as one in
our world, but as speaking to us from
the dead, in this exhortation to practice true
religion.

“ By religion (saith he) I mean such a
“ sense of divine truth, as enters into a
“ man, and becomes the spring of a new
“ nature within him ; reforming his
“ thoughts and designs, purifying his heart,
“ and governing him in his whole deport-
“ ment, his words as well as his actions :
“ convincing him, that it is not enough, not
“ to be scandalously wicked, or to be bare-
“ ly innocent in his conversation ; but that
“ he must be intirely, uniformly, constant-
“ ly, and purely virtuous, and animated
“ with a zeal to be still better and better :
“ using prayer, and all outward devotion,
“ as solemn acts, testifying what he is in-
“ wardly, and at heart ; and as methods
“ instituted by God to be advancing still in
“ the use of them farther and farther.—
“ This is true religion.

“ And of this (he adds) I write with the
“ more

SERM.

I.



“ more concern and emotion, because I have
 “ felt this the true, and, indeed, the only joy
 “ that runs through a man’s heart and life.
 “ It is that which has been for many years
 “ my greatest support ; I rejoice daily in it ;
 “ and I feel from it the earnest of that
 “ supreme joy, which I pant and long for.
 “ I am sure there is nothing else can afford
 “ any true or compleat happiness.— I have
 “ seen a great deal of all that is shining and
 “ tempting in this world. The pleasures of
 “ sense I did soon nauseate. Intrigues of
 “ state, and the conduct of affairs have
 “ something in them more specious ; and
 “ for some years I was engaged in these ;
 “ but still with hopes of reforming the
 “ world, and of making mankind wiser and
 “ better : but I have found, that which
 “ is crooked cannot be made strait. — I
 “ acquainted myself with knowledge, and
 “ that in a great variety, and with more
 “ compass than depth : but, though wis-
 “ dom excelleth folly, as much as light
 “ excelleth darkness ; yet, as it is a sore tra-
 “ vail, so it is so very defective, that, what
 “ is wanting to compleat it, cannot be
 “ numbered.—I have also cultivated friend-
 “ ship with much zeal, and a disinterested
 “ tenderness ; but I have found that this
 “ was also vanity, and vexation of spirit,
 “ though it be of the best and noblest sort.

“ So

The great business of human life.

29

“ —So that, upon great and long expe- SERM.
“ rience, I could enlarge on the preacher’s I.
“ text : *Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity.* ~~~~~
“ But I must also conclude with him : *Fear*
“ *God, and keep his commandments, for this*
“ *is the whole of man ; the whole both of*
“ *his duty, and of his happiness.*” (b)

(b) Burnet’s Hist. V. 2. p. 669.



SERMON



S E R M O N II.

The final Account:

ROMANS XIV. 12:

So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

SERM. II. **T**H E S E words contain one of the plainest and most important truths of religion ; and therefore are well worthy our most diligent, serious attention and regard. As they stand connected with the context, they are a conclusion drawn from what the apostle had asserted before ; viz: that all christians were in a particular manner to consider themselves as fellow-servants to one Lord and Master, to whom they were devoted : and that the strong should bear the infirmities of the weak, and that the weak should think charitably of the strong, in the use of their liberty ; leaving the

The final account.

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the final decision of those and all other mat- SERM.
ters of dispute between them to him, who II.
is the common Lord and Master of all. 

For, saith the apostle, as he is our Lord and
Master, *we must all appear before his judg-* ver. 10.
ment seat: for it is written, (and to this most 11.
solemn appearance are those words of the
prophet most justly to be accommodated.)

As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow Isa. xlv.
to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So 23.
then (since every tongue is to confess to him)
every one of us (it follows from hence) *shall*
give account of himself to God.

I shall farther discourse from the words
under the three following propositions,
which at first view appear naturally to
arise out of them, viz.

I. That we are accountable creatures.

II. That, as such, there is certainly to be
a reckoning season, when we shall be
called to give account.—And,

III. That then *every one of us must give*
an account of himself to God.

And when I have enlarged on these heads,
I shall proceed to some inferences by way
of application.

I. Let us attend a little to the view
in which the proposition of my text
repre-

SERM. represents mankind ; and it is that of their
 II. being *accountable creatures*.

Now this supposes, that we are formed with powers and capacities for such a character, and that we are here in a state of trial and probation ; and that we are so formed, and placed in such a state, by him who made us, and to whom we are most properly in subjection. And this is really the state of the case.—For,

As creatures, we are therefore dependent on him who made us ; and, as reasonable creatures, capable of inquiring after God our maker, of knowing, loving, and serving him, we are obliged to exercise these powers and capacities in this manner ; because it is the noblest and most worthy end for which they were given, and to which they can be employed.

And when we consider this distinguishing excellence of our nature, and the world in which we live ; inquire how we came into it at first ; and attend to the imperfection and vanity that belongs to every condition in it, the short continuance we have in it, and the strong desire and tendency there is in human nature to something eternally beyond it : I say, when we lay all these considerations together, we have the greatest ground to conclude, that, as he that made us, sent us into this world at first, thus furnished and
 capa-

capacitated, it was as into a state of trial SERM.
and probation: it being most suitable and II.
worthy the designs and nature of his moral {
government; that those who are the subjects
of it, and so are made capable of virtue,
should have their virtue duly exercised and
tried, that it may become rewardable; and
that consequently there should be a place
and state of trial.

We are not then to consider ourselves
in this world as lords of it, as if it, and
we were absolutely *our own, and none* Pf. xii. 4.
were Lord over us. But we are to con-
sider ourselves, as subjects to, and servants
of another; even his, who is our original
proprietor and Lord: who gave us our be-
ing, and who placed us in this part of his
great household, and entrusted us with our
several talents, which we are to employ for
him, as *good Stewards of his manifold gifts.* 1 Pet. iv.
We are to consider all that we have as only 10.
what we have received from him, who
takes notice of, and observes our behaviour,
and expects that we live in this world, with
a view and desire of obtaining his final ap-
probation.—This truth is obvious to the
calm and sedate reasoning of our own
minds: that, as we are not to live here al-
ways, this life is to be considered but as the
beginning of our existence, and an intro-
duction to another; that it is closely con-
nected with eternity, and leads us into it.

D

And,

SERM. And, that as we are evidently made for
 II. eternity, so we are here to be preparing for
 it : and that we are in this state to consider
 Heb. iv. ourselves as eminently *having to do with him*;
 13. who as he is our inspector, and constant
 observer, so hath also an unquestionable
 right to take cognizance of us, and to call
 us to an account for our behaviour in that
 state wherein he has placed us, and for
 the use or abuse of those gifts and powers
 wherewith he has entrusted us.

And, indeed, the natural evidence of
 this truth is so strong, from the *law* of God
 Rom. ii. *written in the hearts* of men, that the ge-
 14. nerality of the heathen philosophers allowed
 it ; I might say, all, but the Epicureans, who
 denied a God, or, at least, a providence.---
 Nay, the workings of that vicegerent of
 God, conscience (which he has fixed in eve-
 ry human breast) make every man, at
 times, feel something of the force of this
 truth ; whether he has the honesty to own
 it or not, or whatever methods he may take
 to stifle and suppress it. Our apostle tells
 us, that the *gentiles*, or heathen, *who had*
no written law, yet had the sense of the
 eternal unalterable difference between good
 and evil, virtue and vice, so strongly im-
 pressed on their hearts, that their *consci-*
 Rom. ii. *ences* always *gave testimony* in their favour,
 15. when they had done well, and their *thoughts*,

(it

(it should have been translated, *their reason-* SERM.
ings) served either to *accuse* or *excuse* II.

them to themselves, according as their moral temper and conduct was really right or wrong.—Now whence this witnessing or worrying of conscience? whence this inward approbation or disapprobation of the reasoning mind of man? this natural rising of the intellectual powers, at least at some intervals, against all his moral corruptions and debauches of his true reason and understanding? Whence all this, but from a supposition that mankind is an accountable creature? and eminently, and principally accountable to him that made him; and made him capable of most easily discerning this difference between virtue and vice, good and evil, and of acting accordingly? This difference, indeed, is essential and eternal; and consequently would have been so, whether man had existed or not. Yet 'tis most certain, that whenever God created such a being, as a subject of moral government, the morality, or virtue, of his conduct must be estimated according to such distinctions; and therefore man must be sensible of such a difference of actions and characters, whether he be able to dispute learnedly about it or no. Hence the very mind of such a creature must assure him that he was accountable: nay, and sit in

SERM. judgment upon him immediately.--But what
 II. is this accountableness? is it to terminate
 only and entirely within a man's self? no
 surely. — I think, it is a most strong and
 convincing proof to us, that what we call
 natural conscience is the voice of God : that
 the pleasure or self-indignation which we
 feel at the performance of a good or evil
 action, (nay, I will add, at the perceiving
 either a good or evil disposition prevailing in
 our hearts) is an anticipation of a future
 higher judgment, and of the rewards or
 punishment which shall be our portion, ac-
 cording as our prevailing temper and con-
 duct shall then be found virtuous or wick-
 ed.

But this thought carries me on to the
 next general proposition, which is this :

II. That, as it appears we are account-
 able creatures, there must certainly be a
 reckoning-season, when we shall be called
 to an account. *Every one of us* (saith the apo-
 stle) *must give an account to God.*

This proposition is but a natural deduction
 from the former. For if mankind are account-
 able creatures, it is evident that there is one
 who has a right to call them to an account ;
 a right founded in his proper authority, as
 their supreme Lord and Master ; and this
 authority founded in his original rela-
 tion

tion as Creator, and therefore Lord of all. SERM.
And we may be assured, he hath those rea- II.
sons for requiring this account, from which
it would not become him to depart: it is
what he owes to himself, as the righteous
moral governour of the universe; at least it
appears highly fit from the relation that man
stands in to him.

And that there will be such a reckoning-
day, the same dictates of natural conscience,
which tell men they are accountable crea-
tures, assure them; and thus anticipate that
final judgment.

This certain future state of retribution
the wiser Pagans acknowledged; and their
reasoning was very strong and conclusive:
viz. "That as there was a most certain
" unchangeable difference between virtue
" and vice; and yet, frequently, the truly
" good and virtuous were miserable, and
" the notoriously wicked often (to outward
" appearance) most happy and prosperous;
" (notwithstanding a wise and good provi-
" dence was supposed to preside over and
" govern the world;) therefore there must
" be a future state, where all these seeming
" irregularities in the conduct of an infi-
" nitely wise and good providence shall
" be set right; so that virtue and goodness
" shall be finally and eternally rewarded,
" and wickedness everlastingly punished."

SERM. — This I say was the manner in which the
 II. wisest and most sober heathen argued; and

very justly, indeed: and what does this infer, but that there shall be a solemn general reckoning with mankind, when they shall be all called to an account for their behaviour; that the divine justice and righteousness may be rendered most conspicuous, and the honour of his government and laws vindicated in the most public and glorious manner? — Nay, St. Paul tells us of the most abandoned of the heathen, (however their continued practice contradicted the remainders of natural knowledge) that even *they knew the judgment of God, that those who did such things as they did, were worthy of death.*

Rom. i.
 32.

But this great and awful doctrine, which is so admirably suited to have the strongest influence on the hopes and fears of the human heart, and so to direct our conduct: this doctrine, I say, which the heathen could not but suppose to be true, is most fully and substantially confirmed in that revelation which God has given to us by his son in the gospel; which (as I am preaching to a society of professing christians) I shall take for granted you all receive as true and divine.

There

The final account.

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There we are fully informed who made SERM.
us; how we came into the world; what is II.
the present state and condition of man; }
what is his business here, even that of a
probationer for eternity; that this, and this
only, is his state of trial; that when this
short life here ends, his trial is all over;
and he is fixed in unchangeable happiness
or misery, according to his behaviour here:—
that *after death comes the judgment*; and Heb. ix.
every particular soul shall, on it's dismissal 27.
from the body, be certain what his state
shall be to eternity.—Nevertheless, for the
more full and grand manifestation of the
divine perfections in the government of this
world, and the rational inhabitants of it; that
all the heavens may see and applaud his righ-
teousness, and the whole earth confess his
glory: he *has appointed a day*, a particular so- Acts xvii.
lemn period, *in which he will judge the world* 31.
in righteousness, and have all mankind stand
before him at once, from the first parents
of the human race, to the last of all their
children; that, as they were sent into this
state of trial in bodies of flesh, which were
most closely united with their souls, *they may* 2 Cor. v.
receive according to what they have done in 10.
*their bodies, whether it has been good, or whe-
ther it has been evil.*

This gospel farther informs us, that the
day, or season appointed for this general

D 4

judg-

SERM. judgment is the *end of the world*, when all the dispensations of God towards mankind in this life, as a state of trial, shall come to a full period. And, that though the exact time when this judgment shall take place is as yet a secret reserved with the Almighty alone; yet it shall be noticed in the most solemn manner by the resurrection of the dead, the change of those who shall be found alive, by dissolving elements, and a world in flames.

This gospel informs us yet farther, that in order that this general judgment of mankind may appear, even to those who are to give up their account, most just and equitable, God has determined to judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, even *Jesus Christ*: who in his divine nature, was his own son; but who took the human nature upon him, and became man for our salvation: when being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; thus suffering the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God: and for this end he both died, and rose again and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead, and of the living. And therefore, as a reward of his voluntary obedience unto death for the salvation of men, being raised from the dead, God hath highly exalted him, far

Mat. xiii.
39.

Acts xvii.
31.

Philip. ii.
8.

1 Pet. iii.
18.

Rom. xiv.
9.

Phil. ii. 9.

The final account.

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far above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named, not only in this world but in that which is to come, placed him at the right hand of the majesty on high, and made him Lord of all: and under that character, hath committed all judgment to him, and full authority to execute it, and to raise the dead to life by his all-powerful voice, that they may receive their sentence at his mouth, and be rewarded by him with eternal life, or punished with eternal damnation.

SERM.

II.

Eph. i.

20. 21.

Heb. i. 3.

John v.

22, 25,

26, 27.

This is the scripture account of the matter; and it farther represents all professing christians as the servants of this Christ, their common Lord. *For none of us, saith the apostle, liveth unto himself, i. e.* “We christians should never consider ourselves as
“properly our own masters, so as to be absolutely at our own disposal, and without
“law to any one, so that we may live just as we fancy; neither does death set us free
“from this subjection, which delivers men from all other power whatsoever: *for whether we live, we live unto the Lord;*
“we are the subjects of his government, and the servants of his family, and therefore are obliged to conduct ourselves according to the laws of his government; or,
“on the other hand, *whether we die, we die unto the Lord:* death does not free us
“from

ver. 7, 8.

SERM. "from his power, but we still remain un-

II. "der his dominion. *Whether therefore we*

live, or whether we die, we are the Lord's :

"we are still his property, he having the

"continued, full absolute power over us,

"and may order and dispose of us as he

"pleases."—Since then this is the state of the

case, that we are all the servants of Christ,

and he is appointed our Lord, and is, under

that character, to be the judge of quick and

dead ; it follows, that *we must all appear be-*

ver. 10. *fore the judgment seat of Christ,* and there

give up an account to him who will, from

a perfect knowledge of all our behaviour,

determine our eternal state.

And this thought leads me to consider
the last proposition.

III. That at this day of solemn reckon-
ing, *every one of us must give an account*
of himself to God ; to God, who will judge
the world by Jesus Christ. And this is the
most striking and affecting consideration of
all.

Mark, how particular the apostle repre-
sents this judgment to be. *Every one of us*
(saith he) shall give an account ; none shall
be excused, upon any consideration what-
soever : but all that have ever been here in
a state of trial, shall then be called to an
account

account for their behaviour. Thus St. John SERM.
describes it in his vision : *I saw the dead, small II.*
and great, stand before God, and the books were
opened ; and the dead were judged out of those Rev. xx.
things which were written in the books accord- 12.
ing to their works. — Then the high and the
low, the rich and poor, the prince and the
slave, the master and the servant shall all
appear, and not one be missing. Whatever
distinctions may have been made among
men in this world, by which some have set
themselves above others, and out of the
reach of their inquiries, they shall all vanish
in that great levelling day ; and the greatest
shall stand upon no higher ground than the
meanest.

And there, as every one shall appear, so
each shall *give an account of himself to God.*
Which very important assertion is not so to be
understood, as if none of us were obliged to
take any care or concern about the welfare
and happiness of others ; nor as if we shall
not be called to some account for others, as
far as they were cast by providence under
our special care, or as they may have suffer-
ed by our influence, neglect, or example :
since every man is to consider himself in
some degree as his brothers keeper, and un-
der that character, in a just sense, account-
able for him. And it is worth our obser-
ving, that the apostle recommends to the
con-

SERM. converted Hebrews, obedience and special
 II. regard to their pastors from this considera-
 ch. xiii. tion: *Obey them that have the rule over you,*
 17. *and submit yourselves; for they watch for your*
souls as they that must give an account, that
they may do it with joy, and not with grief;
for that is unprofitable for you.—And the rea-
 son is plain: because this giving account of
 others is no way inconsistent with a man's
 giving account of himself, but indeed is one
 part of that account, as it respects him in
 his relative capacity, and having a duty in-
 cumbent on him thereupon; nor, on the
 other hand, does one person's being con-
 sidered, in his relative capacity, as accountable
 for another prevent that other person's be-
 ing accountable for himself, as a free moral
 agent. For the apostle adds; that if their
 pastors should not give an account of these
 christians at last *with joy*, but *with grief*,
 such an account *would be unprofitable*, by
 which he means a great deal more, even that
 it would be infinitely dreadful *to themselves*
 who were under their charge, and had
 rendered that account so very uncomfort-
 able through their disobedience and wicked-
 ness.

These things being premised, we are thus
 to understand the apostle:

I. That

I. That every man shall be called to an SERM.
account for his own personal conduct, and II.
be judged according to his own particular
personal character, whatever that be.

This is highly necessary to the equity and rectitude of this judgment of God; because whatever agreement or similitude there may be in common as to the circumstances of mankind, yet there is always something so peculiar to each, that it is hardly possible to suppose them exactly and in all respects perfectly the same: nay, though two men should perform what to outward appearance are the same actions, yet they would each be distinct; and the principles and motives, from whence they proceed, might make a great difference as to the degrees of good or evil belonging to them. The personal actions of one man can never possibly be the personal actions of another, nor can he therefore fully answer for any but himself. There will be no possibility therefore of having another man account for us, or of being judged by proxy. As it is to *his own* ver. 4
master the servant is to *stand or fall*, and not to the judgment or estimation of a fellow-servant; so that master will have each servant personally to appear and answer to his call.

And for what shall each man be called to give up an *account of himself to God*? Why, for his own actions as a moral agent;
for

SERM. for which he is capable of accounting, and

II. he only. And O how very particular, minute and exact an account will it be! which will reach not only to the external actions of each man which were subject to public notice, but to his private actions also, which none were witness to but God and himself; nay, and even to the several springs of action, the motives to them, and the prevailing temper and dispositions of the mind. In how strong and particular a manner does

Ecccl. xii. the wise man express it? *God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*

Rom. ii. And our apostle tells us, that in *that day he shall judge the secrets of men, (even the secret things of their hearts) by Jesus Christ.*

So then you and I must give an account each of himself to God: how we have employed our powers and faculties as reasonable creatures; how we have improved each his own peculiar talents, (and what they are, each of us may know if we will;) how we have attended to the designs of providence in placing us in this state of trial; how far we have considered our stations and relations in life, and have endeavoured to answer them; wherein we have been habitually thoughtless and unconcerned, and thereupon defective; how we have used the blessings and bounties of providence; how

The final account.

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how we have borne and submitted to its SERM. rebukes and chastisements; by what II. spirit we have been governed, and what have been our motives, what our principal end and aim in those actions, which in the sight of men may have been approved; how far we have preserved a strict regard to conscience in all that we have done, or scrupled doing; in a word, how we have behaved according to that rule and law which he has given us for our directory now, and which is to direct his judgment at last. And as we are so happy to live under the law of faith and grace, that *perfect law of liberty*, James i. 25. we are to account, whether we have on the whole ordered our hearts and conversations aright, with simplicity and godly sincerity towards him, ourselves, and all men; how we have improved our sabbaths and sacraments, and other means of grace, in order to our obtaining the final mercy of God through our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. For this is to be the righteous process of that decisive day: *Those who have sinned without law*, (or without any positive law) shall be judged *without the law*, or only by the law of nature, that *law of God written in their hearts*; and Rom. ii. 12. *as many as have sinned under the law shall be judged by that law*, under which they lived. —But I proceed, and add,

2. That

SERM.

2. That we are to understand the apostle :

II.

that every one is to give an account to God only for himself, and not for others : in those things which specially and personally relate to them only, and which he is under no sort of obligation to reckon himself concerned about ; nay, in which his interesting himself would appear at least nothing better than over-officiousness.—And here all matters of pure conscience are evidently included ; and especially conscience about those things, even in circumstantial matters of religion, which God himself has not, in his word, given any certain determination about. This was the very case on which St. Paul argues in this chapter, and in confirmation of which argument the words of my text are introduced. Whenever then any one, let him be of what denomination of christians he will, shall take upon him to persuade me out of my regards to my conscience, and right of private judgment as a christian, under the plea of the decency of complying with him and those of his party, and shall urge this under an apparent zeal for my soul, and the danger of my dying a schismatic, and in a state of separation from the church ; (only because I cannot in conscience lay an equal stress on those things which neither God, nor Christ whom he has appointed

The final account.

49

pointed head of the church, have seen SERM.
fit to lay any stress upon :) I must own I am II.
sorry for this weak brother, if he really is
no wiser than he appears to be ; but, as
generally in such a case I suspect artifice,
I therefore shall bid such a man take care of
himself, and not be troubled about me in
those things, where God never gave him
commission. And as he would give a good
account of himself to God, I would advise
him never to *put a stumbling block in his* Rom. xiv.
brothers way; truly his brother, though ^{13.}
he may not so thoroughly like him.

But this thought leads me to conclude the
subject with two or three short reflections.

1. Is every man to *give an account of*
himself to God? then let us beware of hastily
judging or censuring others : and that for
this plain reason ; because we know not but
we may censure one whom our common
Lord may approve, and who may give up
his own account with joy. This is St. Paul's
inference from my text : *Let us not therefore* ver. 13.
judge one another any more. Who art thou that ver. 4.
judgest another man's servant ? to his own
master he standeth or falleth. And however
thou mayest, through a false zeal, cast him
down now, his own master may enable him
to stand at last. *Judge nothing therefore be-* 1 Cor. iv.
fore the time, untill the Lord shall come. ^{5.}

E

This

SERM. This advice, as I before observed, comes

II. with peculiar force to all those, who hastily fit in judgment on men's opinions in religion; and their scruples of conscience, where God has not plainly decided.—And it will hold also with respect to the particular conduct and behaviour of persons in life, where their general course is agreeable to the word of God.—And then, it also respects weak christians; that they should not censure those, who think proper to go farther in the use of christian liberty than themselves; provided they keep within the bounds of strict christian piety, and use not their liberty as an occasion for serving the flesh, but for promoting the true general interests of common christianity.

2. *Is every one of us to give an account of himself to God?* then let every one of us be careful to mind our own proper business, and get our own account ready.—And if we mind this in earnest, we shall find all our time so fully taken up about our own most great and important affairs, that we shall scarce be decently at leisure to judge or find fault with others, in those matters which lie only between them and their master, and which we have no true concern in at all.

“ Instead

The final account.

51

" Instead then of looking so much abroad, SERM.

" I will endeavour to confine my views II.

" more at home, and look within myself. ~~~~~

" And O ! what abundant reason have I for

" it ? I am sent into this world by God my

" creator as into a state of trial for eternity.

" With him I have most to do here, to ap-

" prove myself to him as my constant ob-

" server, who marks all my paths, knows

" my heart, and weighs even the spirit

" within me in his most exact ballance.

" While he sees fit to continue me in this

" state of trial, I live and act in it ; and

" whensoever he pleases I must die out of it :

" but I know not when, nor how soon ! and

" then, after death, I must appear before

" this God as my all-knowing and impar-

" tial judge. O my soul, I must ! and then

" I must give an account of myself to him ;

" to him who can see through all falshood

" and disguise at once, and will uncase an

" hypocrite even to the very heart and soul.

" And as my account then appears will his

" judgment pass, which shall fix me either

" for happiness or misery to eternity ! Of

" what infinite importance is it that I then

" be able to give up my account with joy ?

" — And is not the short and uncertain

" time I have here full little enough to be

" thus employed, without troubling myself

" about the affairs of others which do not

SERM. " belong to me? What if the summons

II. " should come from my Lord at once :

Luk. xvi. 2. " *Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward ; and I should*

" be quite unready? I dread above all things

" that fatal surprize! And as I do ; in pro-

" spect and constant expectation of this call,

" I will, by the grace of God, *herein* daily

Act. xxvi. 16. " *exercise myself to have a conscience void*

" *of offence both towards God and towards*

" *all men.* And for this purpose I will at-

" tend closely to the dictates of conscience ;

" be frequently calling myself to an ac-

" count, and so anticipating by faith

" that great reckoning day. I will take

" care that there be no long arrears on my

" side ; and will endeavour frequently and

" seriously to judge myself now, to think

" how such and such an action will look

" then, when examined in that day : that I

" may not be condemned with the unholy

" and the sinner at last. And that I may

" not deceive myself through a partial self-

Gal. vi. 3. " *love, or thinking myself to be something,*

" *if indeed I am nothing,* and so perish

" through a final deception ; I will often

" look upwards, and with an humble fer-

Psalms cxix. 23, 24. " *vency say : Search me, O God ! and know my*

" *heart ! try me, and know my thoughts ;*

" *and see if there be any wicked way in me,*

" *and lead me in the way everlasting !*"

The final account.

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3. *Is every one to give an account of himself to God?* This may comfort all sincerely good persons under the mistaken judgments of their fellow-creatures or fellow-christians now.—And how often do the truly upright suffer under such censures? The best that ever lived have not been exempted from them. And so perverse are the wicked, so partial and defective are some who call themselves good, that very often the better and the more distinguishingly good a person is, the more he becomes a mark of reproach or of censure.—Well; but let the truly upright man still hold on his way: and as long as he has the *testimony of his conscience for his rejoicing, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not by fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, he has his conversation in this world, let him comfort himself with this thought, that his witness is in heaven, and his record is on high; and that there is a day hastening when his righteousness shall break forth as the light, and his judgment as the noon day.*—And in the mean time, let him show the superior greatness of his mind to all the reflections of weak and passionate men, by expressing himself in the language of the apostle: *With me it is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment,—for he that judgeth me is the Lord.*

SERM.

II.

2 Cor. i.

12.

Job xvi.

19.

Psalms

xxxviii. 6.

1 Cor. iv.

3. 4.



SERMON III.

The worth of the soul.

MATTHEW xvi. 26.

What is a man profited, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

SERM.
III.

John ii.
24, 25.

THIS question was put by one who knew what was in man, and needed not that any should tell him; and who perfectly understood the worth and value of that better part of man, his soul, which he came from heaven to earth to save.—The immediate occasion of his proposing this question was this. Our Lord had just before been declaring to his hearers, what the terms and conditions were on which alone persons could become his true disciples, and be intitled to the blessings of his kingdom; a king-

kingdom not temporal, not consisting in SERM.
worldly power and dominion, not made up III.
of earthly pomp and grandeur, but one
spiritual and heavenly, which was founded
in his own blood.—After having rebuked
Peter for his appearing so disgusted at the
thoughts of his sufferings and death, he
turns himself to all his disciples, and thus
addresses them: *If any man will come after* ver. 24.
me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross
and follow me.—Terms these; which, be-
cause they sounded so exceeding harsh to
flesh and blood, our Lord proceeds to take
off the edge of their seeming severity, by
assuring them of the absolute necessity of
complying with them, in order to their
eternal happiness. *For whoever will save his* ver. 25.
life, i. e. will refuse to comply with these con-
ditions, and to avoid suffering and death will
deny me, he shall lose his life, hereafter forever:
but who so will undergo difficulties, and, when
called out to it, be ready to suffer the loss of
all things, even life itself, for my sake, shall find
it; even life everlasting hereafter. For what
is a man profited if he should gain the whole
world and lose his own soul? or what shall a
man give in exchange for his soul?

In which words, the following serious
and awakening considerations offer them-
selves to our meditation and enlargement.

SERM.

III.

I. Here is plainly and strongly intimated to us the worth and inestimable value of the *soul of man*.

II. We are here also warned, that this *soul of man may be lost*, and with it, all the happiness it is capable of. And then,

III. Here is represented, in the most striking manner, the folly and wretchedness of that man, who shall *lose his soul*, or forfeit and give up his title to everlasting happiness, on any consideration whatsoever.

I. In these words of our Saviour, there seems strongly intimated the inestimable worth and value of the *soul of man*.

The word rendered, *Soul*, in my text, is the same which in the preceding verse is translated, *Life*. But that the meaning of it is not to be confined to this mere animal life, but must include the whole of man's existence, seems evident, by the manner of expression in St. Luke, where we read it thus: *What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose himself, or be cast away?* From comparing these two passages it evidently follows, that the *soul of man*, the inward thinking principle, is most properly

Luke ix.
25.

The worth of the soul.

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perly *himself*, and most justly denominates SERM.
him to be what he is. III.

There is no need to take up your time in nice, metaphysical, subtle disquisitions concerning the nature of the soul: we may much more profitably content ourselves with the account which the scripture give of it, and which the truest and soundest philosophy confirms, instead of overthrowing.—And the representation there given us of it (from which its true worth and intrinsic value may be naturally inferred) is this: that is of a distinct nature from the body. This latter is of the earth, earthy, formed of the dust at first, made of corruptible perishable materials, and shortly will moulder into dust again; and while it continues to move and act, is beholden, under God, to this soul united to it, as the principle of life and action: the soul then must be superior to, and of a different and more excellent nature than the body which it inhabits.—It is a spirit, an incorporeal being, the offspring of God, an intelligent ray from the eternal intellectual sun, the father and fountain of all lights. It hath the image of God upon it, being made after him in knowledge, and naturally immortal. *There* Job xxxii. 8.
is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the almighty hath given him understanding: by that we are taught more than the beasts of the Ib. c. xxxv. 11
field,

SERM. *field, and made wiser than the fowls of heaven.*

III. This soul is capable of knowing God, the perfection of all good and excellency, and whom to know is the perfection of the highest finite understanding; is capable of conversing with Him in this distant world, and of enjoying an immortal life hereafter, and an happiness of the same kind with that of the blessed God himself.—As much then as the nature and capacities of a spiritual, rational, and immortal being are superior to dull, insensible inactive matter, so much more excellent is the soul, and unspeakably more worthy than any material being with which it can be compared; infinitely more worth than this world, and all that it contains; because it can be perfectly happy without it, and would not be completely happy in possessing and enjoying the whole of it, if it had nothing better.

But to proceed,

II. This *soul* of man, so excellent and valuable, *may be lost*; and with it all that eternal life of happiness, of which it was made naturally capable, and was designed for. This the very question in my text supposes; and moreover also, that there is great danger of this dreadful loss, and forfeiture of eternal happiness.

Indeed we are not so to understand the words,

words, as if the immaterial thinking principle were to be struck out of being, or annihilated. SERM. III.

This is impossible to be effected, but by a positive act of omnipotence; and if it was to be effected, it could not be perceived: whereas the loss spoken of here seems to be something that the rational being may thoroughly be sensible of, and feel in the most tormenting manner its own disappointment. And what is this loss, but that of the perfect final happiness of its nature, being cast away from God's blissful presence, and the glorious displays of his power and goodness?

And that an immortal soul may be thus, in this worst sense, lost, and that there is a great hazard and danger of it, is evident, if we do but consider the present state as a state of trial.—Now the very notion of such a state supposes difficulties and dangers. And this is appointed such a state to such beings as we are, for wise reasons: that, being moral agents, our virtue may be tried and approved; and so the final happiness offered to us may be the reward of our virtue, our free choice of obedience to the moral law of God, by which we are to be governed; and, that if we miss of that blessedness it should be only our own fault, as the natural effect of our wilful disobedience, and in no respect chargeable on God our Maker.

So

SERM.
III.

So that the very state and condition of mankind in this world declares him not indefectible in goodness, and absolutely perfect; but in a possibility of being cast away forever, and suffering an eternal shipwreck.

And that there is great danger of this dreadful end to man hereafter, can need no laboured proof to any that believe the account of things given in the scripture. Are we not there told of a great number of the nobler order of beings, even the angels, created all together in the perfection of their most exalted finite powers and faculties, and made to attend in the immediate unveiled presence of the eternal God, and perfectly free from all moral contagion; that they did abuse their glorious liberty as the eldest sons of God and children of light, and were cast down from heaven into a dreadful hell, and thus suffered an eternal loss of their nobler selves, and all the happiness of their original habitation in the highest heaven? When, I say, we read these awful truths, can we doubt, that man, the frail child of dust, is in danger of losing himself, and his everlasting all, in such a world as this? A world, in which he is encompassed with the infirmities of the flesh, surrounded with, and strongly impressed by the objects of sense; a world where temptations enter in at every sense, and they are urged

urged upon him by the devil, and his SERM.
agents, whose artifice is continually employ- III.
ed to deceive and destroy ; a world, where

men have corruptions within, as well as temptations from without ; where sinners entice, and some of them their intimate acquaintance and associates. In such a world can such a creature as man be free from danger of losing his soul, himself, and his everlasting heaven ? Have angels sinned, and been sunk into everlasting despair ? and shall man reckon himself safe, and eternally secure ? Impossible ! None can soberly believe this that has a soul within him, yet properly exerting any of its noble powers.

To preserve such then from sinking into a thorough stupid insensibility ; and, if possible, to rouse such as are far gone in the dangerous lethargy, to consider their danger before it is too late : I now proceed to a distinct enlargement on the last head of discourse, viz. to consider

III. The striking representation of the folly and wretchedness of that man who *loses his soul* and forfeits eternal life, on any worldly consideration whatsoever. This the very question of our Lord suggests to us : *What shall it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? or what*

SERM. *what shall a man give in exchange for his*
 III. *soul?*

Our Saviour here alludes to a common proverb, that a man would give all the world to save his life, his bodily life; and by extending the meaning of the word here to his soul, to include, or especially refer to, his better and his rational immortal part, his argument comes with the greatest force and spirit: (q. d.) "If it is a known allowed maxim, and reckoned a point of wisdom among you, that a man should be willing to hazard and part with every thing to save his bodily life; what folly must it be to lose his better life, that of his soul and eternity, for the pleasures and enjoyments of the present life? How infinitely wretched must he be hereafter, when he finds his loss, but shall be able to find no exchange, no redemption for this precious soul, which he has himself thus foolishly cast away?"

So that the folly and wretchedness of this bargain will evidently appear to every sober mind in these two views.

1. The price to be paid for the world is vastly beyond the purchase.

For a man to bid high for a thing of comparatively little or no value; to give a large estate for straws, or, at best, for the playthings of children, is judged a

proof

proof either of a wrong disordered head, or a natural want of common understanding. SERM. III.

What then must it be to stake the glories and happiness of eternity, and that immortal part within us by which alone we are capacitated for the enjoyment of them, for this world, even the whole of it, with all its pleasures for the longest finite period? what must it be esteemed but an acting the most unaccountable part? "Our Saviour (it hath been observed) " here puts the case to the greatest advantage on the purchaser's side, and makes the very best of it; " he supposes the gain to be greater than ever any man yet made; he puts a case next to an impossibility, that a *man should gain the whole world*, which no man ever yet did, nor ever had any probability of doing." Yet, if such a gain was possible, our Lord declares it too dearly bought with a soul.

Tillotson
V. 3. p.
594.

For let us suppose the most, that one man could purchase the whole world, he could by no means enjoy it all; and what benefit, what advantage would he reap from all the rest of it, save the satisfaction of calling it his own? If we may judge what would be the state and condition of a man who should obtain the whole world from those who share the largest portions of it; we should have reason to conclude, from their baffles, disappoint-

SERM. appointments, and vexations, that his would
 III. be the greatest of all; and that with a whole
 world in his hands his soul would be left
 empty, and his desires more restless and
 tormenting than ever. So that could a man
 purchase the whole world at the expence
 of his soul, he would cheat himself in the
 most egregious manner.

But after all, "this supposition of a
 Tillotson, "man's gaining the whole world is but
 P. 597. "a feigned case. The market (says one)
 "was never yet so high: no sinner had
 "ever yet so great a value for his im-
 "mortal soul as to stand upon such terms.
 "Alas! infinitely less than a whole world;
 "a little sordid gain, the gratifying of a
 "vile lust, or an unmanly passion, the
 "smile or favour of a great man, the fear
 "of singularity, or of displeasing the com-
 "pany: these, and such like mean and
 "pitiful considerations tempt thousands to
 "make away themselves, and to be undone
 "for ever.—No, among all the numerous
 "troops of sinners that go to hell in such
 "thongs, there is not one of them that
 "ever made himself so wise a bargain.
 "Alas! most men barter away their souls
 "for a trifle, and set their eternal happiness
 "to sale for a thing of nought!" But
 2. The folly and wretchedness of such a
 purchase will appear in the stronger light
 still,

The worth of the soul.

65

still, if we consider that this loss of the soul, SERM.
once sustained, is irrecoverable. A soul thus III.
lost, though by the purchase of the whole {
world, is lost for ever. Though a man may
give his soul for the world; yet, if he would
give ten thousand worlds, he cannot get that
soul again which he had thus foolishly
parted with, nor recover eternal happiness.

This is the pungent question of our Lord,
which fastens down the charge of folly
and guilt upon the sinner in the most affect-
ing manner: *What shall a man give in ex-
change for his soul?* What would he not give,
if he had it, to purchase back this most pre-
cious immortal jewel, which he has sold for
earth and dirt? But what has he to give?
what shall he be able to give? alas! nothing.
The word translated, *Exchange*, properly
signifies a ransom; and is "well suited to
" lead us to reflect, how willing a condem- Dodde-
" ned malefactor would be to give all he ridge in
" had got by his crimes to buy his pardon; loc.
" and how vain, in this case, his attempt
" would be." Alas! no ransom can be
found; for the *redemption of the soul is pre-* Pf. xlix.
cious, and it ceaseth for ever. For the loss 9.
is not felt, till the thing, the false happiness,
for which the soul was bartered is vanished;
and there can be no return to this world,
when it hath turned its back upon the dy-
F ing

SERM. ing sinner, or when it, and all the works
 III. that are therein, shall be burnt up.

~~~~~ The consequence of this loss, as I before  
 observed, will not be an utter insensibility,  
 but attended with the greatest distress and  
 misery. There will be the deepest sense of  
 the loss, and the most tormenting apprehen-  
 sion of the greatness of it. "The original  
 Id. *ibid.* " words, *to lose his life*, (saith a good critic)  
 " does not imply merely a man's meeting  
 " death accidentally in the pursuit of gain,  
 " (as a merchant who might be lost in his  
 " voyage;) but it properly imports under-  
 " going a capital execution, which is an  
 " idea of much greater terror." Eye hath  
 not yet seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it yet  
 entered into the heart of man to conceive,  
 the exceeding greatness of that misery which  
 shall overtake this foolish dealer in the other  
 world, when vengeance shall come upon  
 him to the uttermost; while the thoughts  
 of all the enjoyments and possessions of this  
 world, which shall then be vanished, in-  
 stead of asswaging, shall augment their grief  
 and misery for ever.

For hereupon this irreparable loss of the  
 soul, and of its everlasting happiness, will be  
 accompanied with everlasting self-upbraidings  
 and reproaches, in the regions of despair.—

When



When the soul, stript of all its disguises, SERM.  
shall enter destitute and forlorn into the III.

world of spirits; and there behold the happiness above at a distance never possibly to be reached, and find nothing but a dreadful hell for its endless portion and abode: what agonies and convulsions will not seize it? what weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth?—" And is all this for  
" sin? Those yonder glories, that endless  
" happiness above, might have been mine,  
" as well as theirs who are now in possession  
" of them! I might have had my lot and  
" portion with the angels of God, and  
" dwelt for ever at his right hand in that  
" fulness of Joy. But I parted with all  
" hope of a share in them for something  
" else which I preferred before them!—and  
" what was it? was it something more worthy of my pursuit, that would better reward my choice, and be a more satisfying  
" portion? O no! wretched fool that I  
" was! I made the most sorry bargain: I gave  
" this immortal soul for a vain perishing  
" world; and not for a whole world neither, but for a trifling inconsiderable part  
" of it, dishonestly got, or too fondly embraced! It was for the indulgence to a  
" base lust, to sinful gratifications and carnal pleasures that I exchanged my soul;  
" and have lost both that and my purchase

SERM. " too ; lost my God, and my everlasting hea-  
 III. ven ! — I was warned of the danger my  
 " soul was in from the temptations of the  
 " present evil world, but I would not take  
 " the caution ! I rushed on, and made a  
 " desperate stake ; and have nothing left  
 " but to lament my folly and misery to  
 " eternity ! "

O Sirs ! to think that this misery was self-procured ; that the sinner was his own enemy, that he earned his destruction, laboured out his own ruin against all the experience of others, against all the calls of God, and the invitations of a bleeding dying Saviour ; and to reflect, that he might have had a comfortable share of the good things of this life, in the ways of piety and virtue, and heaven at last ; and yet he would run the desperate venture, and hath lost both worlds : how will the sinner's conscience be a never-dying worm, continually preying upon him with dreadful reproaches ! Every such keen reflection shall be a stab to his heart, and the grief and anguish increase with its duration.

And now, my friends, what remains, as a close of this practical subject, but that I persuade each of you to go from hence and resolve, that, by the grace of God, you will always esteem the care of your souls the one thing

thing needful ; and from hence forward SERM.  
*work out their salvation with fear and* III.  
*trembling. O that men were wise ! that*  
*they would understand these things,* and apply Phil. ii.  
their hearts unto this most true and ne- 12.  
cessary wisdom ; *and consider their latter end !* Deut.  
Be exhorted to attend to, and think what xxxii. 29.  
will be the certain consequences of actions.

Let this be our first leading self-inquiry :

“ What am I ? I am a reasonable creature,  
“ capable of eternal happiness, and sent  
“ into this world to prepare for it ! I am in  
“ great danger of losing it ; and, if I do  
“ lose it, it will be infinitely better for me  
“ that I had never been born ! Let this  
“ then be my first concern, to secure the  
“ happiness of this dear soul of mine. Let  
“ me inquire with the greatest earnestness ;  
“ *what I must do to be saved ;* and steadily Act. xvi.  
“ pursue the course with unfainting zeal.” 30.

When sensual pleasures allure, when snares  
of vice are spread before your eyes in all  
their deceitful charms, when the devil pre-  
sents you with an offer of the riches and  
glories, the profits and gain of this sorry  
wicked world ; remember upon what terms  
you are to obtain and enjoy them : remem-  
ber that your soul is at stake ; and if you  
yield, you are selling your title to immortal  
happiness.



SERM.

I I.

John vi.  
27.Prov.  
xxviii.  
20.

Let the men of business, that are pushing hard for this world, take special care, lest by *labouring* too hard for the meat that *perisheth*, they lose that *which endureth for everlasting life*, and their souls famish to all eternity! Let those who are *making haste to be rich*, and to that purpose, that they may get estates the sooner, take artifice and tricking into their assistance, consider, that they are most certainly hazarding the loss of the true riches for the uncertain gain of a small portion of the unrighteous mammon. Let the profane and wicked, who make so very free with their souls, as to pawn them in every oath, and damn them on every trifling occasion, stop a little and consider their words; lest the God in whose hand their breath is, take them at their word, and send them down quick into everlasting burnings!

In a word, let us all learn to live more and more in earnest for heaven and eternity. And O! how earnest should we be, when *the prize of our high calling of God by Jesus Christ* in the gospel is so great, and when the time for our securing this everlasting happiness is uncertain, and short at the longest! Let us now, in the days of our health, labour to have that just and true notion of the worth of our souls, which we shall all have when we come to die. Then  
mens

Phil. iii.  
14.

mens apprehensions of things are greatly SERM.  
altered; and those who have lived careless III.  
of their souls will find, and confess with ~~~~~  
grief and horror, that to have made the  
securing their salvation their great concern  
would have been their truest and most pro-  
fitable wisdom.

“ We (saith the great Tillotson) who Vol. 3.  
“ have the souls of men committed to our P. 598.  
“ charge, have the lot to see many of these  
“ sad sights! O my God! what confusion  
“ have I sometimes seen in the face of a  
“ dying man? what terrors on every side?  
“ what restless workings, and violent throws  
“ of a guilty conscience? And how are we  
“ tempted, (who are commonly sent for too  
“ late to administer any proper comfort to  
“ such persons; how are we tempted) to  
“ sow pillows under their uneasy heads,  
“ and out of very pity and compassion are  
“ afraid to say the worst; and are grieved  
“ at our very hearts to speak those sad  
“ truths, which yet are fit for them to hear?  
“ It is very grievous to see a man in the  
“ paroxisms of a fever, or in the extreme  
“ torment of the stone, or in the very ago-  
“ nies of death. But, the saddest sight in  
“ all the world, is the anguish of a dying  
“ sinner: nothing looks so ghastly as the  
“ final despair of a wicked man, when *God*

SERM. " *is taking away his soul.*" — As ever then  
 III. we would not make up that wretched number, let us now make the care of our better  
 Job xxvii. part our chief concern, that instead of losing  
 8. it at last, we may be safe and happy to eternity!

Rom. x. *Brethren, my hearts desire and prayer to*  
 1. *God, for every one of you is, that ye may be saved.* God forbid that any here should be lost eternally through my neglect, in not warning them to *flee from the wrath to come!*  
 2 Cor. v. *Knowing and believing the terrors of the Lord,*  
 22. *as revealed in the gospel, we persuade you:* and I cannot but persuade myself, that the truth and importance of what we say is *made manifest in your consciences*; though you may have too often stifled the remonstrances of those faithful monitors through the care and hurries of the week. Beloved, let me once more exhort you this day before we part from this assembly to consider, that God has done every thing that is fit for him to do to make you perfectly and for ever happy. And the Lord Jesus Christ his son has come into this apostate world in our nature, and bled, and died to redeem you from death, and hell, and to purchase for you an everlasting heaven. And nothing can deprive you of all this blessedness but your own selves. And  
 will



will any of you that hear me this day chuse **SERM.**  
death and everlasting destruction? Shall this **III.**  
be the unaccountable madness of your folly   
after you have been so often told of it?—If so,  
your ruin will be the more inexcusable;  
for this repeated warning, and your guilt  
and punishment unspeakably aggravated.

*But I still hope better things of you, even Heb. vi.*  
*things that accompany, and will end in your 9.*  
*everlasting salvation; though I thus speak.*





## SERMON IV.

The sinful fear of man.

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PROVERBS XXIX. 25.

*The fear of man bringeth a snare ;  
but whoſo putteth his truſt in the  
Lord ſhall be ſafe.*

SERM.  
IV.

~  
The firſt  
ſermon on  
this text.

**T**HE grand and noble deſign of all real religion is to make men truly eaſy and happy in this life, and to prepare them for the full and compleat felicity of their natures in another. And the way by which religion accompliſhes this beneficial deſign is, by rectifying the diſorders of the human mind, and bringing a man to be at peace within himſelf on the only proper and ſolid foundation. And this peace is introduced into the ſoul by ſubduing its unruly paſſions and affections ; by bringing them

them to their proper poize and temperament, SERM.  
and turning them from wrong objects to those IV.  
which are most worthy and fit to direct and  
engage them. Now the master passions are  
love and fear: under these, like two generals,  
are all the others marshalled; and from  
one or other of these are all the mixed varying  
passions of the heart of man tinctured,  
and compounded. Accordingly therefore  
as either of these are fixed, the will becomes  
prevailingly inclined, and the temper and life is  
habitually influenced.

Now to prevent these leading passions of  
the soul from settling on wrong objects, and  
so deceiving the poor creature to it's utter  
ruin and destruction, religion points out the  
only true one, and guides to that and that  
alone: and, by representing the evil and  
danger of misplaced affections and passions  
in an inordinate degree, keeps the heart in  
its best self-possession and enjoyment. Thus  
for instance, the scriptures frequently exhort  
and command us to make the blessed  
God the supreme object of our love; *to love* Mark x.  
*him with all our heart, and with all our soul,* 30.  
*and with all our mind, and with all our*  
*strength:* and to engage us to such a love  
of him as the greatest and best of beings,  
they set forth, in the most striking manner,  
the danger and mischief of loving any thing  
more, or in opposition to him. In like  
manner,



SERM. manner, at other times, we are directed to

IV. God as the only proper and supreme object  
 of our fear: and to engage us always to

Isa. viii. *sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and*  
 13. *make him our fear, and our dread,* the  
 scriptures warn us of the numberless evils  
 and calamities, to which we shall ex-  
 pose our selves by fearing any thing more,  
 or in opposition to, the great almighty God,  
 and especially feeble mortal man like our  
 selves.

This plain but important truth my text  
 inculcates in the strongest manner; and  
 holds up to us, as the confirmed and repeat-  
 ed observation of the wisest man, and so  
 most worthy our attention and regard.—  
*The fear of man bringeth a snare; but whoseo*  
*putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe,—or*  
*shall be set on high.*

The words, as they lie in their order,  
 afford us two very plain and instructive pro-  
 positions, each of which deserves our par-  
 ticular attention and regard; and the latter  
 of which, by the rule of contraries, streng-  
 thens and confirms the former. The  
 first proposition laid down in my text  
 as a certain truth is this: that *the fear*  
*of man bringeth a snare.* And the other is  
 this: that *whoseo* fears and *puts his trust in*  
*the*

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*the Lord, shall be safe; or as it is in the ori-* SERM.  
*ginal, shall be set on high; above those* IV.  
*snare which intangle persons of the con-*  
*trary character, and out of the reach of those*  
*uneasinesses and disquietudes which are the*  
*sad effects of the prevailing fear of their*  
*fellow mortals.*

I shall begin with the first proposition laid down, which is this: that *the fear of man bringeth a snare*.—And here, under this general head, I would consider,

I. What is that kind of *fear of man* which Solomon here represents as attended with such dangerous consequences.

II. What we are to understand by this *fear of man bringing a snare*.—And this will lead me to illustrate the truth of the proposition, by giving some instances of the sad effects of such fear in the tempers and conduct of men.—And then

III. I shall endeavour to lay before you the baseness, folly, and wickedness of living under the influence of such a mean and sordid principle.

I. I am to consider a little distinctly what we are to understand by that *fear of man* which Solomon, in my text, represents as attended with such dangerous consequences.

—The

SERM. — *The fear of man (saith he) bringeth a*  
 IV. *snare.*

*The fear of man.*—The general idea of fear, (especially in scripture language) implies veneration, reverence, and awful respect, as well as dread of evil, and terror at the apprehension of its approach. And in this full idea, there is a fear of man that may be very reasonable and becoming.—It would be a kind of affront to the understanding of my hearers to attempt a laboured proof, that veneration and reverence are due to parents from their children, to masters from their servants, or to princes and rulers from those who are their subjects; or that there ought to be a just dread and terror in the minds of those who act contrary to, and violate the obligations which these duties of nature and society require of them; a dread and terror under the apprehension of those just punishments from men, which the nature and laws of society justly lead them to expect, as far as their transgressions come within their cognizance. And the being devoid of that dread, instead of shewing a proper intrepidity, argues the most stupid, incorrigible, and wickedly harden'd temper. Such a fear is in a manner necessary for the support and honour of those distinctions among mankind, which the wisdom



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dom of God, the great father and gover- SERM.  
nour of the world, has seen fit to appoint for IV.  
their mutual happiness.

Nor yet farther is it to be supposed, that all fear even from wicked men and their power (which may be more impetuous through their wickedness) is entirely sinful. Fear, as I observed, is one of the strongest, and of the leading passions of the heart. And for that reason it frequently surprizes, and most powerfully affects us, before we are aware of it. The cause and the effect are here so closely connected, that very often they appear the same, and unite to distress the unhappy sufferer. And therefore there is a justifiable fear of such enemies; as far as it excites us to use all necessary precautions to avoid them; or to prepare, by the assistance and blessing of God, to make the best defence against them.

These things being premised, I observe that *the fear of man*, mentioned in my text, is a slavish dread and terror of men: such a *fear of man* as leaves God out of the question; such a fear and dread of the power of man as shall engage the fearful soul to forego all superior regards to the almighty power of God; such a fear as shall make him ready to submit to any compliances, the most sinful not excepted, to escape

SERM. escape those evils which men may be ready  
IV. to bring upon him.

— In this sense, a fear of man, i. e. a dread of what mortal man can do to us, though it should be the taking away our lives by the most dreadful death, is sinful, and therefore not to be given way to. —

cap. viii.  
12, 13.

Thus saith the prophet Isaiah; *Fear ye not their fear, neither be ye afraid*, q. d. “Be not afraid of those things with which the enemy endeavours to intimidate you, so as to take any unlawful or unbecoming methods for your security; but sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear; and let him be your dread.” And thus did that divine

Luke xii.  
4, 5.  
Comp.  
Mat. x.  
28.

person, to whom all the prophets gave witness, direct his disciples: *Fear not them who can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: Fear him, who, after he hath killed, hath power to destroy both soul and body in hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him.*—The fear of man then, which my text forbids and represents as followed with most pernicious consequences, is that which turns the eye of the mind from the Creator to the creature; and thus, sensualizing the powers of the soul, makes the terrors which arise from the objects of sense appear the most formidable and dreadful.

But

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But let us now proceed, and inquire,

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II. *How this fear of man brings a snare.*

—This is here asserted. — And the sense is very plain and obvious: viz. It brings them into many temptations; and, in consequence of their complying with them, exposes them to various insults and reproaches of their enemies, as well as to many other difficulties and distresses, out of which they cannot extricate themselves. q. d. “Such an one is  
“ensnared into many sins, and wicked  
“compliances, in order to avoid the evils  
“which he fears from men; and, by his  
“yielding to this fear, is bereft of that counsel which only can direct his conduct,  
“and extricate him out of these difficulties,  
“in which his distrust of providence has  
“involved him.” —For as the degree of this slavish unreasonable fear is sinful, so will be the effects and consequences of it: just as the passion of love, (when degenerated so much, as to fix supremely on the riches of this world) *brings men, as the apo-* 1 Tim. vi.  
*stle saith, into temptations, and a snare, and* 9. 10.  
*into divers lusts, which drown them in destruction and perdition, after having pierced them through with many sorrows.*

But the truth of this proposition I shall endeavour more fully to illustrate and evince, by giving some instances of the bad ten-

G

dency



SERM. denoy of this slavish fear of men. And we  
 IV. may consider it, as leading persons into the  
 commission of known sins, and to neglect  
 the discharge of proper duties; and thus  
 as engaging them in many compliances,  
 which their judgment and consciences can-  
 not thoroughly approve.

1. This fear often leads men to the com-  
 mission of known sins: and so it *brings a*  
*snare.*

Thus, if the wrath of man, and the ef-  
 fects of that are what strike the mind with  
 the most formidable apprehensions, he that  
 is under this unhappy influence will be  
 likely to take any method for the avoiding  
 what he fears; and if he cannot escape it  
 with a good conscience, nor without breaking  
 through his regards to God, these bounds  
 shall give way, and all shall be overthrown.  
 — Should then persecution arise against  
 the professors of true religion and virtue,  
 and their enemies threaten all with grie-  
 vous sufferings and death who would dare  
 to maintain them; he that slavishly fears  
 man would, if he could not any other way  
 avoid it, be tempted to deny the truth, and  
 disown the cause of his master. — This was  
 the case, you know, with Peter: a sudden  
 surprize prevailed so far that he *denied Christ*;  
 and being taxed again with being his disci-  
 ple, in the judgment-hall, where he saw his

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Mark xiv.  
71.

1 Tim. i.  
19.

his master before his unjust judges, through fear of being discovered as such, and the consequences of it, he *denied him* again with an oath, and began to curse and to swear, saying: *I know not the man of whom you speak*; thus adding one sin to another. And how many others, when they have expected the fiery trial of their fidelity to the cause of God and religion, have *denied the faith*, or made a shameful shipwreck of that and a good conscience together?

Again: if persons of this character fall into company with those who are wicked, debauched, or profane; especially if they should be such on whom they have any dependance, any expectation from their favour and regard with respect to their success in the world, and the bettering their fortunes: how easily are they persuaded not only to be witnesses to their vices, but to join in and bear a part with them; and, it may be, to laugh at, and ridicule those principles of which, at other times, they have professed their approbation?

Again: how has this slavish dread of man involved persons in the guilt of fraud, injustice, unrighteousness, oppression, and even perjury itself? The fear of the frowns of the great and mighty of the earth, the dread of feeling the effects of their anger and resentment who themselves *fear not* God,  
G 2 Luke xviii. 2.

SERM. God, *neither regard man*, has sometimes  
 IV. turned away justice from the gate, acquitted  
 the guilty and condemned the innocent, and  
 established iniquity by a law. What was it  
 that carried Pilate all those desperate lengths  
 in the treatment of our blessed Lord? How  
 came he, contrary to all law and justice,  
 though a public magistrate, to suffer a per-  
 son, against whom no legal well-supported  
 accusation was brought, to be treated in so  
 cruel and insolent a manner by an outrage-  
 ous multitude? What was the reason that,  
 when he declared he *found no fault in him*,  
 he yet delivered him over to a public  
*scourging* by his own officers? How came  
 it to pass that, notwithstanding the admo-  
 nition of his wife, sent to him while he was  
 on the bench, (in consequence of an extra-  
 ordinary dream) and all the checks and  
 struggles of his own conscience, he yet, after  
 repeated declarations of the innocence of  
 Jesus, delivered him to be crucified, and  
 suffered that barbarous murder under the  
 colour of law and justice? What could one  
 imagine should be the reason of a man's in-  
 volving himself in such known, dreadful,  
 complicated guilt as this? Would you know?  
 The scripture then tells you, it was all  
 owing to the fear of man. It was for fear  
 of disobliging the Jews: lest incurring their  
 displeasure in this affair, which their mali-  
 cious

Jo. xix.  
1, 4.

Mat.  
xxvii.  
19—26.



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cious hearts were so fully set upon, he should make them more his enemies, and by that means complaints should be made of his past bad conduct to the Roman emperor; and he, thereupon, be turned out of his government, and perhaps severely punished for his unrighteousness. It was this fear of man that hurried this wicked creature through all this dreadful work, till he finished it in condemning the holy and the just one.—And yet it is worth our observing, that this fear of man, though for the present it might answer his end, yet instead of securing him from the evils which he dreaded, only served, by hardening his heart the more, to lead him on in a course of continued wickedness; till at length his destruction came upon him like an armed man, and he was not able to stand against it.

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IV.

Nay, and in other cases, how has this slavish fear of man driven those who have yielded to it into those very measures to avoid evil, which have most surely and speedily brought upon them all that they feared? And no wonder: because as this faulty passion arises from a distrust of the care and good providence of God, so God justly may withdraw his aid and assistance from those who in such instances reject him, and leave them to themselves; and when

SERM. they have thus run themselves into the way

IV. of temptation, and their chief support is gone, they become an easy prey to it, and are soon led captive by it. Remarkable to

Isa. xxx.  
2, 3, 7.

this purpose are the words of the prophet to the Jews in prospect of an invasion from the Assyrian king. The people were greatly afraid, and were above all things desirous of being secured against the fury of their enemies. But instead of taking God's counsel, and trusting him, they rejected his advice, and would trust in the shadow of Egypt, and in the strength and swiftness of their horses to carry them speedily out of the reach of their adversary. But, saith the prophet in the name of Jehovah, *the strength of Pharaoh shall be your shame; and the trust of the shadow of Egypt shall be your confusion: for the Egyptians shall help in vain.* — Thus saith the

Ibid.

Isa. 15—17

Lord: *In returning and rest ye shall be saved;* i. e. "If ye stay quietly within your own walls ye shall be safe, the enemy shall not hurt you:" but ye said: *No, for we will flee upon horses; therefore shall ye flee: and we will ride upon the swift; therefore shall they that pursue you be swift: one thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one.* — And this proved the case with them in the end.

2. This fear of man leads persons to the frequent omissions of known duty, and so brings a snare. — If there is no ground to dread

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dread persecution from men for the discharge of our duties; yet the fear of the censure, the laugh, the banter and ridicule of others, and especially those who are above them in life, who are reckoned the gay, the witty, the fashionable and polite, shall lead many to a shameful neglect of their duty to God; to break through those restraints which they know the wise and manly strictness of religion requires; and carry them into many wrong and faulty compliances, which their consciences, in their serious hours, cannot approve, but must justly censure and condemn.—For instance,

To what but this (at the bottom of all) can be owing the too general neglect of family prayer in many houses, where the heads of it would think it very hard to be censured as living *without God in the world*, Eph. ii. 12. in other respects?—The plea no doubt is, an invincible bashfulness, or an apprehension that they may not be able to perform the duty in the manner they could wish to do it, or that they apprehend might be most acceptable to others. — But what is this plea? what does it amount to more than a fear, a slavish fear of the persons of men, of creatures like ourselves? This must certainly be the case, if the same persons can break through any natural diffidence and



SERM. distrust of themselves, in order to become  
 IV. agreeable in company; if they can overcome the restraints of a reserved temper so far as to join in the conversation of the numerous assemblies of what are called the well-bred and polite, and be free and open, and unreserved among them: and especially, if they can do or say any thing before their household, rather than pray with them. It is in this case too evident to me, that the same regard to the praise or dispraise of men, which carries them to overcome their natural bashfulness in one instance, where their knowledge of the world, and their characters as well bred and delicate, are in danger of being censured, influences and governs them in their living without God in their houses: the fear of being thought too formal and precise, and to make too great a show of their religion, and of being censured as persons quite out of the fashion.

And I am sure this charge holds more strongly still with respect to those, who, though they have made conscience of performing this, and other such instrumental duties of religion, yet will baulk the performance of them, when any of their friends and acquaintance happen to become, but for a little while, parts of their household;

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and especially when any of them shall be persons who are quite indifferent to religion; and yet there shall be an endeavour to

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gratify them just as is most agreeable to their degenerate taste, and to fill up the time as much as possible with every thing that might prevent the religion of the household, if a thought of it should come across their minds.

What is all this but the fear of man? the fear of displeasing and troubling a friend; one who puts himself under your roof to receive the civilities of your family, and who therefore is unworthy of them, if he should treat your regards of the great householder and Lord of all with that indifference with which you treat him, if you set your regards to him aside, out of your false good manners to your guest.

And the same may be said with respect to those who profess a regard to the Lord's Day, and the attending the public worship of it. When any such shall break in upon their stated regards to that sacred day, and the worship of it, either in the house of God, or their own, merely because company intrudes upon them, or they associate with those who pay no regards to such serious and important work: what is all this better than the slavish fear of man? a fear of the sneer and jest of those who are on that account infinitely despicable? a fear to dis-

please

SERM. displease those who may have, many of  
 IV. them, *cast off the true reverential fear* of  
 God, *and restrained prayer before him?*

Job xv. 4.

And will not such a compliance in consequence of that fear lead persons on into deeper and more entangling snares? Mark the progress of these sinful compliances; they never end well, but lead to the gradual throwing off the practice of all religion, and then too commonly the profession of it. And no wonder: for when religion sinks into nothing but complaisance, that complaisance will, sooner or later, destroy all true real religion.

Again; to what but this fear of man is owing that dread of sober singularity, which prevails so much amongst those who are the descendants of the most exemplary christians? What is the reason, why those who have been taught and instructed in the good ways of God, and have for a time appeared to walk in the narrow path, as long as they were under the eye and observation of their best and wisest friends, whenever a seasonable opportunity offers, mix with the vain, the thoughtless, and giddy, and seem willing to run any lengths they please? Is not this a slavish fear of man, and of some of the worst men too? and does it not argue a prevalence of that fear over the solid substantial principles of true manly religion, the fear  
 of



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of God, and the governing veneration of, and SERM.  
regard to him, who is the great all in all? IV.

— What is the reason, why any of those who come to a sacrament in the house of God, shall be unwilling to be known as communicants by their temper and conduct in common life, and be ashamed at any time to be told of it by their former gay companions? what but this fear of man; and only of the meer jest of those, whose approbation is not worthy the desire of a truly honest and good man?—Why do those who ought to reprove vice, and promote virtue at all proper times, instead of that, flatter men in their faults and vices, and treat sinners as if they were saints? but only through fear of man; lest they incur the charge of ill manners by their honest freedom, and the poor unjust resentment of those they should admonish?—And lastly: why are any of those who profess a regard for God and true religion shy of discovering that regard; when, at proper seasons, they ought to speak for God, confess him before a scoffing age, and plead for his cause and interest in a degenerate world? Why? but because they value *the praise of man more* Jo. xii. 43. *than the praise of God*; and seek *the honour that comes from men, but seek not that* Jo. v. 44. *which comes from God*; and in consequence of that, dread the dishonour, and dispraise that

SERM. that comes from men as a worse evil in  
IV. appearance than any thing else?

But I need not add any more particular instances on this head; and shall therefore close this branch of the subject with endeavouring

III. To shew you the baseness, folly and wickedness of this mean and servile spirit.

And that it is really a base worthless spirit to be over-awed by an unreasonable fear of others is generally agreed; even when it regards mens conduct only as to the affairs of this life. The mean servile cringing wretch, that is willing to do any thing, or to yield and submit to any thing, though never so sordid and dishonourable, rather than not humour those from whom he hopes to make some little advantage to himself, is generally despised by all who have any notions of true honour and dignity left. — And is such a temper and conduct less base when it leads to fear man more than God, or in opposition to him? Can any thing sink the human mind more below its proper dignity, and render it so despicable as this? Can any thing more strongly show the degeneracy of a reasonable immortal spirit, than to be afraid of acting in that manner which is most agreeable to its noble and excellent nature? to be afraid only of the faces of men,  
and

and so very tender and delicate, that (as one SERM.  
well expresses it) "they cannot sustain de- IV.

"rision, or endure to be flouted at for be-  
"ing out of the mode, or wearing the un- Dr. Bar-  
"couth garb of conscience? This is a most row, V.3.  
p. 271.

"perverse and unmanly modesty; a false,  
"a vile, a shameful shame." To be afraid

of being known to pray to God in your fami-  
lies, and consequently to neglect or omit it  
through this shame: and yet not ashamed to  
live without him in those *habitations*, the Act. xvii.  
*bounds of which he has appointed to every* 26.

*one*; and it is by his protection and care  
alone that your houses are safe from fear!  
To be afraid of distinguishing yourselves  
as true christians, and living like such in the  
world: and not afraid nor ashamed to level  
yourselves often with the company of the  
vain, the sensual and the ungodly! To be  
afraid of singularity and strictness in the  
cause of piety and virtue: and not afraid of  
being undistinguished oftentimes among the  
crowd of the thoughtless, wanton, and pro-  
fane! Shall we be not afraid to yield to those  
compliances, which, if the concerns of this  
life were only in the case, a wise and pru-  
dent man would be sometimes ashamed of;  
only because affairs of infinitely higher  
importance are concerned; I mean those of  
God and religion, and the everlasting wel-  
fare of our souls? To be afraid of doing  
what is really unworthy and unbecoming,



SERM. is just and proper : but to have no fear  
 IV. or shame of committing sin or neglect-  
 ing our known duty, merely to avoid the  
 displeasure or the reproach of men, is the  
 most pitiful and scandalous weakness of  
 mind. " We do not (says the fore-men-

Ibid.

p. 272.

" tioned writer) owe so much regard to  
 " vicious and vain persons as to be dashed  
 " out of countenance by them ; we should  
 " rather, by our masculine resolution, and  
 " upright confidence, put them to con-  
 " fusion."

Consider next the folly of this fear of  
 man. And can there be a greater, than to  
 endeavour to shun suffering and disgrace by  
 doing that which does most justly deserve  
 it ? Besides the folly appears yet more egre-  
 gious, in that such a fear of man is no real  
 or effectual security, but very often brings  
 on those evils, to avoid which, the mind  
 gave itself up to its possession. This I have  
 already illustrated in the remarkable case  
 of Pilate.—And much less can it secure a-  
 gainst those terrors which the Almighty can  
 strike into the soul whenever he pleases ;  
 and which they have the greatest reason to  
 expect who regard man more than him.

And the wickedness is equal to the folly  
 of such a temper and conduct. The expostu-  
 lation of the prophet Isaiah may be accom-  
 modated here so as to express both in the most  
 striking

striking manner. *Who art thou that art a- SERM.  
fraid of man that shall die, and of the son of IV.  
man that shall be as dust, and forgettest the* Isa. li. 12,  
*Lord thy Maker, that stretched out the hea- 13.  
vens, and laid the foundations of the earth?*

q. d. "Is such a creature as this, as feeble,  
" impotent and mortal as thyself, fit to be  
" the object of thy chief fear and dread;  
" so as to make thee forget thy Maker, and  
" draw off thy regards from him? Who art  
" thou that actest in this most unaccount-  
" able manner? art thou a man, a creature  
" of God, a dependant on him? or hast  
" thou no concern at all with him, nor  
" he with thee? Art thou out of the  
" reach of his power, under no obligation  
" to his goodness? or hast thou not more  
" to do with him, and more to fear and hope  
" from him alone than from the whole  
" creation besides?"—Consider this seri-  
ously, and then take heed of the slavish fear  
of man which brings a snare. †

But the remainder of the subject must be  
left to some future discourse.

† The reader that desires to see this argument more  
largely treated of, is referred to the excellent Dr. Barrow,  
V. 3. Ser. 34 and 35. p. 271, &c. where he will meet with  
many important thoughts, expressed in a very striking for-  
cible manner.



## SERMON V.

The proper remedy against sinful  
fear.

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PROVERBS XXIX. 25.

*The fear of man bringeth a snare:  
but whoſo putteth his truſt in the  
Lord ſhall be ſafe.*

SERM.  
V.

The ſe-  
cond ſer-  
mon on  
this text.

**I**N a former diſcourſe I propoſed to en-  
large on the two following propoſitions,  
into which the words appear naturally divi-  
ded.

I. That *the fear of man bringeth a ſnare.*

But on the other hand,

II. *Whoſo putteth his truſt in the Lord ſhall  
be ſafe.*

I have finiſhed the firſt propoſition, and  
have ſhewn,

I. What



*The proper remedy against sinful fear.* 97

I. What is that *fear of man*, which my SERM. text represents as attended with such dangerous consequences: and that is an undue slavish fear and dread of man; such a fear as shall engage the fearful soul to forego all superior regards to God, and his laws. V.

II. I proceeded to show, how this *fear of man* may be said to *bring a snare*: that is, it leads persons often into the commission of known sins, and to live in the neglect of known duties; and I mentioned some instances of both kinds, which I need not now repeat.—And I then proceeded,

III. To point out the baseness, folly, and wickedness of this mean servile spirit.

In order now to prevent our falling under the influence of so base and sordid a passion, or recover those from its power who may have been entangled by it, I shall proceed to point out the proper and only remedy against it. And in that view we are to consider the other proposition in the latter part of the text, which is this:

II. *Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe.*

Here then I shall show,

I. What is that *trust in the Lord*, which is here opposed to this slavish *fear of man*; and then,

H

II. The

SERM.

V.

II. The special benefit and advantage of it. *He shall be safe, or be set on high.*

1. Let us inquire a little into that *trust in the Lord*, which is here opposed to this slavish *fear of man*.—*Who so putteth his trust in the Lord*.—And it implies, in the notion of it, the following things :

1. A firm lively persuasion and belief of the almighty power, wisdom, and goodness of God.

He that would not be overcome by the fear of man's power, nor the dread of his schemes and designs, nor the apprehension of his hatred and dislike, must settle it in his mind, that there is one being infinitely more powerful and wise and good, than the highest creature : who has eternally, in himself, as in an inexhaustible fountain, all these perfections ; from whom they are derived to all his reasonable creatures, in such degrees, and such measures and proportions, as he thinks best to communicate them. He must feel the force of this persuasion in his own mind, that this God of almighty power can over-rule, and restrain the greatest power of men ; and that he suffers it either to go forth, or stops it short, and reduces it to weakness, at his own good pleasure : that infinite wisdom can baffle all the schemes and designs which the craft  
and

*The proper remedy against sinful fear.* 99

and policy of short-sighted human wisdom SERM.  
can invent to delude and entangle others: V.  
and that this God can impart such know-  
ledge and wisdom to those that fear him, as  
shall enable them (if it be best for them) to  
escape all the worst designs of their enemies.  
And such a one must also persuade himself,  
that the infinite goodness of this God in-  
clines him always to exercise and display  
his almighty power and wisdom in the be-  
half of all them that love and honour him.

There can be no trust and confidence  
without an apprehension of the worth and  
dignity of the object of our trust; a persua-  
sion, that it can answer the stress we propose  
to lay upon it, and be a firm and effectual  
support. He then that would *put his trust*  
*in the Lord*, and so make him his refuge  
from the slavish fear of man, must be tho-  
roughly sensible that he is the greatest and  
noblest object of his trust: that none in  
earth or heaven is equally worthy of it; and  
that he only who made all things, and  
who maintains and upholds all things, can  
be sufficient to answer the largest expecta-  
tions and wishes of the human mind; and  
be the surest safeguard, a never-failing  
protector, and impregnable defence. He is  
therefore represented as the *rock of ages*, and  
*the dwelling place of the children of men*, in  
*every generation*.—And hereupon,  
Isa. xxvi.  
4. Marg.  
Psal. xc.



SERM.

V.

2. This *trust in the Lord* (as it here stands opposed to the slavish *fear of man*) supposes a supreme, habitual reverence and veneration of this God, agreeable to that most great and excellent idea we conceive of him.

The belief and lively apprehension which the good man has of God under this character engages him to consider his God as always present, and turns the eye of the mind to him, so as that the man *sees him who is invisible* to an eye of sense, and attends to his constant inspection. And when he sees himself thus every where surrounded with omnipotence, and under the all-penetrating eye of infinite knowledge, he cannot but feel the influence of this persuasion on his mind, and be engaged to *sanctify* the only living and true God *in his heart*, and *make him his principal fear and dread*. Without such an habitually devout and reverential temper, the mind of man is quite unballanced, and left to the force of every faulty criminal passion, to throw in its own weight, and sink it down. And the want of this proper poise, we have seen, is the occasion, the leading cause to all those mean and wicked compliances, to which the *fear of man* carries away so many. And the soul that wants this governing reverential regard for God, can have no just foundation for his trust in him.—But in consequence

Heb. xi.  
27.

Isa. viii.  
13.

*The proper remedy against sinful fear.* 101

quence of such a persuasion of the perfec- SERM  
tions of God, and an habitual reverence of V.  
him, 

3. This *trust in God* implies a firm, un-  
shaken dependance on him for protection,  
and favourable assistance in the way of our  
duty, notwithstanding all that men can say  
or do against us.

The man that sincerely believes in God,  
and truly fears him, will *cast all his care* 1 Pet. v.  
*upon him*, and place his entire dependance 7.  
upon him, as at all times able and willing  
to help and succour his friends and chil-  
dren. And especially in the present case,  
will he seriously commit himself to the pro-  
tection of God, and depend on that, as the  
best security against all that mortal man can  
threaten, or effect against him: to that pro-  
tection which can shelter him not only *from*  
*the strife of tongues*, but from the severer. Ps. xxxi.  
malice of the most incensed enemies; 20.  
and will hope for that support and aid  
from him, which shall enable him to face  
the frowns of men, and be resolutely  
singular in the cause of God, and strict piety.  
In such a well-placed confidence the crea-  
ture does, as it were, go out of himself to  
the Creator, and stay upon him. When-  
ever not only violent persecutions, but temp-  
tations of any kind arise, to weaken the  
force of practical religion on the christian's  
H 3 mind,

SERM.

V.

mind, and he may be in danger of complying, he recollects himself, and flies for refuge to the throne of grace, and to those exercises of devotion which have a natural tendency to brace the mind, and fix it on God. And, with such a heart and spirit, he will place his chief confidence in that Almighty Lord whom he addresses, and rest entirely satisfied of his special regard.

This *trusting in God* in a regular manner is doing honour to his perfections, and paying him a most reasonable tribute of practical praise, submission and dependance: and they that thus endeavour to *honour God*, *he will honour*; and show that he honours them, by taking them under his special charge.

1 Sam. ii.  
31.

But then we are ever to remember, that this *trust in God* can never be regular, but where it finds us determined to keep on in the way of our duty. There must therefore be a fixed resolute purpose, that, by the grace of God, we will hold on our way, and never be ashamed of our profession and principles, nor baulk or interrupt that practice, which our own consciences know and tell us is right, on any consideration whatsoever. And in such a course (while we do not needlessly run ourselves into the way of temptation) we are to commit ourselves to God, and depend on him with all that firmness and repose of mind, which



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which his perfections warrant, and our SERM.  
state and condition require of us; un- V.  
der this full persuasion that he will either   
keep off the temptation, or make us superior  
to every thing that we might be ready to  
fear from men. While we wait on the Lord, Psalms  
and keep his way, we are to trust in the name xxxviii.  
of the Lord, and stay ourselves on our God: 34.  
being assured, that, while evil shall slay the Isa. l. 10.  
wicked, and they that hate the righteous, and Psalms  
laugh the upright man to scorn, shall sooner xxxiv.  
or later be desolate; the Lord will redeem the 21, 22.  
soul of his servants, and none of them that put  
their trust in him shall be desolate. Thou wilt  
keep him (saith the prophet) in perfect peace,  
whose mind is staid on thee, because he trusteth Isa. xxvi.  
in thee. Trust ye therefore in the Lord for 3, 4.  
ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting  
strength. And they that know the name of Pf. ix. 10.  
God (his great and glorious name as the  
Almighty and ever faithful, holy, wise  
and good God; they that know this name,  
and whose hearts and souls are bowed in  
reverence of, and obedience to him that  
wears it) will put their trust in him, and in  
him alone, because he hath never yet disap-  
pointed, or forsaken them that seek him.

But let us now

II. Consider the peculiar benefit and ad-  
vantage of this regular trust in God. *Whoso*  
H 4 *putteth*

SERM. putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe;

V. saith the wise man; and in another chapter; *Whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy is he.*

cap.

16, 20.

Pf. xxxii. Again: *Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.* A beautiful thought!

10.

the good man, he that lives a life of religious obediential trust in the great God, shall escape those many and deadly sorrows which soon spoil all the carnal mirth of the wicked, and overwhelm them with grief, till at last they sink into utter despair; because he is incircled in the arms of divine mercy. His heart and his goings too are established by the power and goodness of his God.

Pfalm

CXXV. 1.

In another psalm, the advantage of this confidence in God is thus represented: *They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.*

*As the mountains are round about Jerusalem; so the Lord is round about his people, from thenceforth even for ever. i. e.*

“As Jerusalem of

“old was so begirt with hills, that it was not

“easily accessible by its enemies: so the

“special Providence of God encompasses

“his people who depend upon him, to

“guard and defend them from all dangers

“in every generation.” With the same view

Prov.

xxx. 5.

at other times God is represented as a *bulwark*, and a *shield* to them that put their trust

in

*The proper remedy against sinful fear.* 105

in him. And the prophet Isaiah encourages the Israelites to make Jehovah their SERM. V.

fear and trust, in opposition to the fear and dread of the Assyrian, and placing their chief dependance on any alliance and confederacy, from this consideration, viz. that

then *the Lord of hosts should be to them for a sanctuary*, i. e. as a sacred inviolable re- Isa. viii. 12—14.

treast and refuge, where no enemy should approach to hurt them, no terrors or disturbances reach to annoy and discompose them. And once more, this

prophet thus represents the advantage and happiness of the upright, good, and sincere man: *He shall dwell on high, his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks.*—All c. xxxiii. 16.

which different expressions of the advantage of trusting in God evidently point it out to us in this view, as providing us with the greatest security and freedom from the hurtful power of the worst evil: and so unite to confirm the assertion in my text, that *whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe*, or V. marg. *shall be set on high*; out of the reach of the slavish fear of man; and of those snares into which that fear brings those who yield themselves up to its unhappy influence.—There is a natural tendency in this disposition itself, a holy regular trust in God, to preserve and secure the mind, and keep it safe from the fear



106 *The proper remedy against sinful fear.*

SERM. fear of men : and then God himself hath  
V. engaged to be their succour and defence.

1. They who put *their trust in the Lord* shall be safe from the fear of men, and the danger to which that exposes them ; because there is a natural tendency in the disposition itself to secure and guard the mind in this happy manner.

A holy trust in God, an unshaken regular dependance on his almighty power and all-sufficient goodness, will make a man both great and easy ; and enable him to look down with a noble contempt and disdain on all the most formidable designs of men against him, and on all those mean arts, those base practices, those pitiful compliances, which others yield to, in order to escape them. This disposition inspires the soul with true courage, and steels it against all the influence of cowardice and false shame. Such a one knows that men can do nothing without the permission of that God, who is the blessed object of his trust : and, as he has placed his confidence on him, so he will not give it up, by yielding to their unjust commands ; but will persist resolutely in his course of duty, whatever difficulties they may throw in his way, and let them do their worst. And at all times, he will chuse suffering rather than sinning.

What

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SERM.

V.

What a remarkable instance, what a noble illustration of this truth, was the conduct and behaviour of the three youths in Babylon towards Nebuchadnezzar? With what resolution were they inspired; and how were they rendered proof against all the snares to gross idolatry, which others were entangled in, who feared the wrath of that wicked tyrant? Mark, how their trust in God, their full confidence in him as the everliving and true God, preserved them calm and undisturbed amidst all the fury and threatnings of the king, and the prospect of a fiery furnace heated seven times hotter than usual. *Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Is it true, that ye do not serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? Now if ye be ready, and will, when ye hear the sound of all kinds of music, fall down and worship the image I have made, well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God which shall deliver you out of my hand? Never were the terrors of man displayed to more advantage, nor more suited to affright into a sinful compliance, than at this time. But they lose all their force, and the persons against whom they are levelled remain firm and unshaken as a rock.—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered, with the most surprizing composure, and* Ib. ver. 16—18.

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SERM. *said to the king: O Nebuchadnezzar, we are*  
V. *not careful to answer thee in this matter:*

“Your threatnings have no other effect  
“upon us than to confirm us in our reso-  
“lutions for a steady adherence to our prin-  
“ciples: and if it be so, that on that ac-  
“count we are to meet with this cruel  
“treatment from you, we are not at all  
“anxious about the event.” For we are  
sure that our God whom we serve is able to  
*deliver us from the burning fiery furnace: and*  
*he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king!*  
*But if not, be it known unto thee, O king,*  
*that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship*  
*the golden image thou hast set up.* — This re-  
solution, by some (who are well versed in  
the knowledge of the world, and practised  
in the arts of evasion) may be called obsti-  
nacy, and a weak, forward, enthusiastic  
zeal. These Jews, perhaps they will say,  
when they were at Babylon should have  
done as the people in general did at Baby-  
lon, and not have been so very formal and  
stiff in their own ways. Why could not  
they have complied with the outward show  
of worship, and occasionally conformed to  
this order of the king; when all the while  
they might have kept their thoughts to  
themselves, and so saved themselves from  
the threatening of the king, and continued  
in his favour, and prevented so much un-  
necessary



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necessary trouble?—But these men of simplicity and godly sincerity knew the God whom they served, and themselves too, much better than to act in so mean and dishonourable a manner: being verily persuaded, that that God whom they served could at once see through all their hypocrisy and disguise, and make their mean compliance turn to their certain disgrace and confusion; and on the other hand, vindicate their determined singularity to their everlasting honour.

In like manner, did the same noble trust in God make Daniel keep on his course of daily family prayer, notwithstanding the decree (which was procured with a cap. <sup>v2</sup> view against him, and signed with the king's <sup>1—10,</sup> signet) *that every one who should ask any petition of any god or man for the space of thirty days, save of king Darius, should be cast into the den of lions.* Now when Daniel (who was preferred above all the presidents, and was prime minister in the Persian court, and so had all eyes upon him, especially those of his envious idolatrous rivals; when this Daniel) *knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house, and his windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as afore*

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SERM. *afore time.*—The circumstances attending  
 V. this conduct of Daniel, I think, render it  
 highly probable, that this was his family-  
 prayer, the religion of his household. For,  
 (as it hath been well observed) “ if it was  
 “ only secret, closet-prayer, how should it  
 “ have been known to have been his prac-  
 “ tice before ? and how should his enemies  
 “ have been able to accuse him now ? ”

Howe on  
 family re-  
 ligion,  
 p. 87.

But will not the polite objectors to all  
 this sort of sober singularity find more  
 fault still with Daniel, than his compa-  
 nions ? What ? could not this honest  
 man, say they, have omitted his family  
 religion only for three weeks or a month,  
 just to oblige his prince, and thus prevent  
 the design of his enemies and rivals ? This  
 must be nothing better than a proud over-  
 bearing humour, immediately after he  
 knew the consequence, and how many  
 lay in wait for him, to go and pray just  
 in the manner he did before in his hous-  
 hold, as often as ever, and with his win-  
 dows open too, to make the more show.  
 If he had a mind to continue in his for-  
 mal particular way, could not he have shut  
 his windows ? or why not rather have con-  
 tented himself with his private devotions,  
 and left his family to themselves ? All this  
 so much ado, and in so evil a time, was,  
 to be sure, quite imprudent, if not worse.

Was

*The proper remedy against sinful fear.* 111

— Was it so? — But you are mistaken, ye SERM.  
forward censurers of strict undissembled reli- V.  
gion, ye time-servers, and complaisant wor-  
shippers of the Almighty. Daniel could be  
accused of nothing but only in matters re-  
lating to his God. Had his enemies then  
found him faulty here, they would have  
succeeded more against him than by any  
thing else. But Daniel knew and felt the  
force of that sound reason, and good under-  
standing in the fear of the Lord; that  
the same ground there was for his wor-  
shipping God in his family at all, must  
certainly hold at all times and on all re-  
turning occasions, let the sneer, the ridi-  
cule, and the threatnings of the greatest  
men suggest what they please to the con-  
trary. And had this great and good man  
in the least warped from his duty, or given  
place for a day, he would have so far acted  
out of his character, and thereby involved  
himself in those difficulties which he might  
never have been able to get clear of.

And, surely, if this *trust in God* thus em-  
boldens a man against the greatest fear that  
his fellow-creatures can strike him with, it  
will, it ought to render him quite proof a-  
gainst the weaker and feebler assaults of meer  
censure and clamour, and the noisy laughter  
or contemptuous sneer of the contemptibly  
vain and foolish.

But



SERM.

But I add,

V.

2. That this regular *trust in God* not only has a natural tendency to fortify the mind against all the terror of man; but also secures the special protection and interposure of that God, who is the object of the religious man's trust; and on that account renders him peculiarly *safe*. *God will set him on high, will raise him, so that his feet shall be above the snares which are laid for him; or if temptations should assault him, and he be exposed to the severest trial of his fidelity, God will vindicate and reward his proper trust, by carrying him safely through them all.*

Marg.

Dan. iii.

26.

c. vi. 22.

This truth is abundantly confirmed from the remarkable instances already mentioned, under the former head. The trust in God which Daniel and his three companions shewed, rendered them *safe*; and their God appeared to their salvation, and to the destruction of their enemies.

Pf. cxviii.

8, 9.

So that the conclusion of the Psalmist on this whole matter is most just and unquestionable. *It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in princes.*

Pf. cxlvi.

3, 4, 5, 6.

*Put not therefore your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish. But happy, and only*

*The proper remedy against sinful fear.* 113

only truly happy, is he, that hath the God of SERM.  
*Jacob for his help, whose hope is the Lord his* V.  
*God: which made the heavens and the earth,* {  
*the sea and all that therein is; which keepeth*  
*truth for ever.*

And now, from all that has been said on this subject, suffer me to call you to attend to the two characters described in my text, and to the mighty difference between them: to the real intrinsic baseness, folly and wickedness of the one, with all its dreadful disadvantages and shocking consequences; and the real excellence and worthiness of the other, with all its noble advantages both as to time and eternity.

And what now remains for a close of all, but that each of us go from hence, determined by the grace of God, that we will govern ourselves henceforward not by the opinions, or the customs of others, or the fear of their displeasure, but by a regular solid fear, and trust in God?

Are there any here, especially of the young, who have been betrayed through this false fear into sinful compliances, or such a conduct, as their professed regards to religion at other times, and the dictates of a truly informed conscience, must condemn them for? Let them stand reprov'd this day; and never dare to venture on, lest they  
I plunge

114 *The proper remedy against sinful fear.*

SERM. plunge themselves into the depths of Satan.

V. But let them rouse, and endeavour to dis-  
 tangle themselves from all the fatal influence  
 of their false fear and shame; and *show*

Isa. xlvii. *themselves men*, by acting up to the dignity  
 8. of their character. And in a course of re-  
 solute strict piety and virtue, let them dare  
 to oppose the popular clamour and censure,  
 1 Pet. v. and *cast all their care upon God*; and they  
 7. will find that *he cares for them*.

And let those who have hitherto escaped  
 the snare be solicitous above all things to  
 preserve the integrity of their minds, and  
 the consistency of their conduct. If you  
 have hitherto been steady and regular, not  
 only in the profession, but the practice of  
 true religion, and personal, and family god-  
 liness, (as I hope I speak to some of this  
 character now before me;) O be persuaded  
 to hold on your way, and never break in  
 upon the rules of true piety, on any con-  
 sideration whatsoever; and you shall find that  
*you wax stronger and stronger*. Do not, be-  
 cause iniquity abounds, let your love wax  
 cold. Do not grow weary, because you are  
 left more alone in the cause of God; but  
 think it worth your while to maintain your  
 ground. Take heed of going too far in  
 lawful indulgences; and especially take  
 heed of being too intimate with those, whose  
 company and example, merely from their  
 superior

Job xvii.

9.

Mat.

xxiv. 12.



*The proper remedy against sinful fear.* 115

superior stations in life to you, and the politeness of their behaviour, may more than ordinarily allure you to unwarrantable liberties. SERM. V.

Beware of an indulgence to those entertainments, which have a tendency to soften the mind, to inflame the passions, and take off the edge of all the powerful motives of religion. And do not chuse to spend your time in those families who live *without God* Eph. ii. 12. in the world, or to learn the profane or wanton language of their tables; because this will make the return to your own regular homes more disagreeable, and, by degrees, if frequently used, drive you from them.

In a word, let not your fear or the shame of disobliging others, and so being put out of countenance by a thoughtless multitude, make you afraid of your duty, or ashamed of your God. But, in a way of well-doing, harden yourselves in the good ways of God. And let your trust be in him now: and then you shall find at last, when those who sacrificed all through a false fear and shame, shall be covered with everlasting confusion; your firm hope and confidence, instead of making you ashamed, shall raise you to the highest heavens, and make you secure in your eternal salvation. Amen.



## SERMON VI.

Submission to the divine will.

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LUKE XXII. 42.

*Father, if thou be willing, remove  
this cup from me ; nevertheless, not  
my will but thine be done !*

SERM.  
VI.

Heb. v.  
7.

**T**HUS, prostrate in the garden, in all the agonies of soul, did no less a person than the Son of God, *in the days of his flesh, offer up his prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, to him that was able to save him from death.* And thus did he resign himself, at the same time, to the disposal of his heavenly father. And here we behold him truly great and amiable in his depths of sorrow and distress ; and completing his character, at the important close of life, by being still ready to finish the whole

*Submission to the divine will.*

117

whole will of God, however painful and SERM.  
severe the yielding to it might be found.— VI.

When he came into the world at first, it was  
with this language: *Lo, I come to do thy* Pf. xl. 7,  
*will, O God! Thy law is within my heart!* <sup>8.</sup>

Through the whole course of his active  
life, this was his declared aim and design:

*I came not to do mine own will, but the will* Jo. vi. 38.  
*of him that sent me, and to finish his work.* c. iv. 34.

And, though the finishing that work was to  
be by his suffering a violent and most cruel  
death, yet he does not resist. But, while  
with innocent importunity he expresses the  
language of nature, by deprecating the evil,  
if it had been consistent with the will of his  
heavenly father; and the wise designs of his  
grace and mercy to mankind could have  
been equally served without his drinking of  
this bitter cup; (which is the meaning of  
that strong expression in St. Matthew: *Fa-* cap. xxvi.  
*ther, if it be possible, let this cup pass from* 39.  
*me:*) he yet adds, correcting as it were this  
dictate of flesh and blood by the readiness  
of his spirit: *Not my will, but thine be done.*

And as Christ has thus *suffered for us,* 1 Pet. ii.  
*leaving us an example that we should follow* 20.  
*his steps;* how necessary and becoming is it  
that we should *arm ourselves with the same* Ib. c. iv.  
*mind?* And how can we better do this, than <sup>1.</sup>  
by frequently meditating on this most ex-  
cellent



SERM. cellent temper and disposition of our Lord  
 VI. and Master? And as we shall find frequent  
 need for the exercise of such a temper as  
 this in a world of various trials and afflictions, so the discoursing on such a subject can never be judged altogether unseasonable.

Let us attend then to the following propositions, or observations, which seem naturally to arise out of this passage of scripture, viz.

- I. That it is very lawful and justifiable for persons to deprecate those evils and troubles which they may apprehend near them; especially such as appear most grievous and shocking to human nature.—*Father, remove this cup from me; or as Matthew has it: If it be possible, let this cup pass from me!*—Yet
- II. That such prayers are then only lawful, when they are made with an entire deference to the will of God. *Father, if thou be willing, let this cup pass from me.*—And then
- III. There must hereupon follow an unfeigned acquiescence and satisfaction in the taking place of the divine will, even though it may contradict our wishes and desires: *Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done!*

I. The

I. The first observation from the words SERM. is this: That it is lawful and justifiable VI. for persons to deprecate those evils and troubles which they apprehend near them, especially such as are likely to be very shocking and severe.—*Father, let this cup pass from me.*

That such petitions are in themselves lawful, this very example of our Saviour proves, beyond any laboured arguments, to all those who call themselves his disciples; and thus own his divine authority and mission.—But then there are also reasons to be alledged for the lawfulness and expediency of such prayers, from our own nature and state, and our relation to God.—Our nature is frail and weak, and lays us open to innumerable evils: our state and condition in this world more evidently expose us still. We are *en-* Heb. v. 2. *compassed with infirmities*; and we naturally desire ease and the enjoyment of our being. When then we apprehend any cloud arising that is like to burst upon us, which will prevent, or break in upon that comfort; especially any big, heavy sorrow that threatens almost to overwhelm us; we cannot but wish to escape the storm. Violent bodily pains and disorders; remarkable impoverishing changes in outward circumstances; the loss of dear engaging children, and valuable relations and friends; these and such like are

SERM. fore evils under the sun, and occasion great  
 VI. trouble and sorrow. The fear of them is natural, and the desire of escaping, or at least having them turned off for the present, very innocent and allowable.---And therefore the expressing these desires to one who is able to keep off the evils we dread, is, in itself, lawful and justifiable. And to whom then can we thus apply, but to God; whose power brought us into being at first, who is the Lord of life, and who framed us with such a nature, and placed us in such a state? And our praying to him is a proper acknowledgment of his over-ruling providence, and our absolute dependance on him; as the God who alone can give and continue peace and comfort to us and our families, or cause trouble, and who only can afford sufficient assistance and deliverance. Thus we acknowledge his prerogative.

Nay, we are encouraged to such prayers as these, even by the invitations of God in his word, thus to apply to him in seasons of distress; and by the gracious promises he  
 Ps. lv. 22. has made to such petitioners. *Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he will sustain thee.*  
 Ps. l. 15, Again: *Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.*

Nor is such an earnest and fervent prayer to be delivered from these calamities and troubles, to be censured as praying against the  
 the



the determinations and decrees of heaven: SERM.  
because we generally, in such cases, know VI.  
not what the designs and determinations of  
God are; and are therefore only expressing  
those affections which he has planted in us,  
and in the most proper way; i. e. by *ma-* Pf. xci. 9.  
*king him our refuge, and putting our trust un-* Pf. xxxvi.  
*der the shadow of his wings.* 7.

Nay, and even in those cases where God  
may see fit to give some general intimations of  
his designs; yet, for aught we know, his will  
may be conditional, though he does not ex-  
press the conditions: i. e. "Upon such con-  
duct in the children of men, he will give  
what he encourages them to expect, or  
avert the evils they fear; or, upon their  
neglecting that conduct, he will suspend  
his favour, and, without repentance, pro-  
ceed to punishment."

And therefore I think this should be the  
rule for our judgment and behaviour, even  
in those instances wherein only the promises  
of God are expressed; "that we should  
never expect the fulfilment of them, but  
in a way of prayer and devotion."--*Known* Acts xv.  
*unto God are all his works from the beginning* 18.  
*of the world,* and what would be always best  
for him to do to all his creatures, according  
to their respective natures. Where then is  
the absurdity of supposing, that he might  
from the first determine to grant blessings  
of

SERM. of all sorts to mankind, as foreseeing their

VI. devout acknowledgment of him by prayer  
 and supplication, and not otherwise?

But I now proceed to the next observation.

II. That these prayers are then only lawful, when they are offered with an humble entire deference to the divine will.—*Father*, said our blessed Lord, *if thou be willing, let this cup pass from me*.—Otherwise we dictate, rather than pray to God.

As to spiritual blessings, indeed, we are allowed to be importunate, to cry earnestly, and determine with the pious patriarch: *I Gen. xxxii. 26. will not let thee go unless thou blest me*. And the more fervent we are here, the more lively sense do we discover of the worth of these blessings, and the better disposition to receive them. But as to escaping the various evils and afflictions of this bodily life, all our most fervent requests, backed even with *strong crying and tears*, should be always brought to a throne of grace with this condition: "*Father, if thou art willing!*"

Neither the will nor the wisdom of God are against our natural innocent affections and desires; but against the exorbitant claims and demands of our unruly appetites and passions.—We are then to keep our requests within due bounds, that they may be lawful:

to pray that, if the Lord will, (if, upon SERM. VI.  
the whole, he judges it best; best for us, most agreeable to our state of trial, most consistent with the wise designs of Providence towards us, and the world about us, most for his own glory and honour; that then) he would grant what we ask, especially as to the keeping off trouble and afflictions from us. And as we are very weak, ignorant, short-sighted creatures, and very partial in our determinations; unable therefore to judge of the schemes of Providence, which are laid deep, and reach far out of our sight: should we take upon us to prescribe to him? or should we not rather desire, that he would undertake and prescribe for us?

And yet even within these bounds, which reason and religion prescribe, there is room enough allowed for the most becoming workings of the tender affections, for a lively pleading and importunity. Could innocent sorrow be expressed in a stronger manner, than by our blessed Saviour in the instance of my text? If we then will go farther, and insist upon having our prayers answered without any deference to the divine will, we must expect either to be rejected with such a severe reproof as this: *Why dost thou strive against him? He teareth himself in his anger.* Job xxxiii. 13.  
*Shall the earth be forsaken for thee? or shall* Ib. cap. the xviii. 4.



SERM. *the rock be removed out of its place for thee?*

VI.



or else God may give us what we so eagerly insist on in anger, and punish us in the severest manner, by granting our weak and passionate requests\*.

But I now proceed to the last observation.

III. That there must, after all, be an unfeigned acquiescence and satisfaction, that the divine will take place, though it should contra-

\* And here I cannot help relating a remarkable passage, the truth of which I am fully assured of.

A fond father was in great distress for a favourite child, whom he apprehended to be dying in its infancy. One and another endeavoured to assuage his grief; but *he refused to be comforted*. At length the minister, on whom he attended, offered to pray with him; and desired him to compose his mind, and give up his favourite son to the divine disposal, since there was no probable hope of his recovery. He replied: "I cannot give him up; and it is my importunate request that God would spare this child to me, whatever may be the consequence."—He had his desire; the child recovered, and grew up, if possible, more and more his darling: but he lived to be a thorn in his side, and to pierce his heart with many sorrows: and, just as he came to maturity, he robbed his excellent master, whom before he had often injured; he was seized by the hands of justice, tried, condemned, and died, one of the most hardened wretches that ever went out of life in that ignominious manner. Upon the fatal day of execution, the mournful father was made to remember his former rash petition with grief and tears; and, humbled in the dust, confessed his folly and his sin.

contradict our wishes and desires : *Never- theless not my will, but thine be done !* SERM. VI.

However hard this may sound at first, yet there can be no christianity without such a temper prevailing upon the whole. The great controversy between God and man ever since the apostacy hath been this: Whose will shall stand? And we are never in a thoroughly right state, till we yield readily to him, and put an end to the controversy, by a due *subjection to him the great Father of spirits.* And, though hard, yet this is a possible thing; for it has been done by frail mortal men in every age. And indeed there is, at all times, so much reasonableness, propriety, and decency in thus submitting our wills to God, and acquiescing in his disposals; that the imitation of our Lord and Saviour, in this part of his example, should rather appear grateful than troublesome.

In order then to be the more fully convinced of this, let us consider, (1) What is this will of ours, that we are so apt to oppose, to every thing else, and to desire by all means to have it pleased: and then (2) Whose will it is opposed to, and what that will is.

1. Since we are so fond of our own wills, let us consider who we are; and what are our wills, that they should always stand.

We

SERM.

VI.

We must surely reckon ourselves of vast importance, and that a great deal depends on our being always pleased : as if the peace and order and harmony of the whole creation depended on keeping us, a very perverse part of it, always in good humour.

Job viii. 9. *And yet we are but of yesterday, and in our best estate altogether vanity.* And is it fit that we, such mean creatures as we are,

5.

should have our wills to bear rule ; and that all things should be ordered according to our pleasure ? — For what is this will of ours ? It is the will of weakness and impotence ; of fickleness and inconstancy ; of short-sightedness and ignorance ; of folly, and sometimes worse, of vice too. It is this blind, froward, prejudiced will of such creatures as we are, *whose foundation is in the dust*, that we are so ready to oppose to the will of God.

Job iv.  
19.

On the other hand,

2. Consider what will this of ours is opposed to, and whose will that is.

It is a will under the direction of infinite unerring wisdom ; always determined to exert itself for the real benefit and advantage of those over whom it governs, and who readily yield to and comply with it. It is a will that is able to perform all, and infinitely more, than we can desire for ourselves ;



selves ; and in an infinitely better manner. SERM.  
And is it not then fit that this will should VI.  
stand, and that this Lord should perform  
all his pleasure ? Should not we readily  
give our wills to be directed by this ? " Our  
" wills (as it hath been well observed) are  
" most our own ; the only gift, the most  
" proper sacrifice we have to offer. These  
" therefore God does most desire, and most  
" highly prize and accept of."

Consider farther, whose will it is we are  
called to submit to, and acquiesce in.

It is the will of God *our Father*. In this re-  
lation our text represents him. And whose  
will should stand, that of the Father, or of  
the froward child ? And then as he is our  
Father, he is to be considered as our Crea-  
tor ; and therefore best able to judge what is  
proper for the creatures of his power, as he  
has the immediate and direct knowledge of  
their whole frame. Again : it is the will  
of a most wise and good Father ; of him who  
hath planted all the bowels of a parent in the  
fathers of our flesh, and who himself there-  
fore will *never willingly afflict, nor grieve the* Lam. iii.  
*children of men*. Nay, it is the will of him, 33.  
who as the most kind, and compassionate  
Father of the human race, *spared not his* Rom. viii.  
*only begotten son, but delivered him up* for 32.  
their recovery and salvation. He therefore  
in all the exertions of his will is never acting  
against

SERM. against them; but only carrying on his kind  
 VI. designs for their compleat happiness, who  
 do not thwart him, by setting up their will  
 against his.—And which now is best? To  
 be directed and governed by this will of our  
 heavenly Father; to yield to his counsel,  
 which will assuredly lead us on to eternal glo-  
 ry; or to be left to our own head-strong pas-  
 sions, till we are filled with our own devices,  
 and lie down in sorrow?

Consider farther, it is the will of our  
 almighty Preserver. As it was owing to  
 his free will and pleasure that we came into  
 being at first, so it is owing to the same will  
 and pleasure that we continue in life. Let  
 him but speak the sovereign word; and in  
 Ps. civ. 29. a moment *we die, and return to our dust.*  
 And shall we then dispute with him, by  
 whom it is that we have any power to will at  
 all? *Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd*  
 Isa. xlv. 9. *of the earth; but woe to him that striveth with*  
*his Maker!*

Again; it is the will of our most holy;  
 and righteous Governour and Lord. It is  
 Dan. iv. the will of him *who doth according to his*  
 38. *pleasure in the armies of heaven, and among*  
*the inhabitants of the earth;* whose word  
 controuls the raging of the sea, makes the  
 foundations of the earth to tremble; stormy  
 winds fulfil his pleasure; and his laws the  
 several parts of nature invariably observe.—

For

*Submission to the divine will.*

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For us then to set up our wills against him, SERM.  
what is it but to dispute his authority and VI.  
supremacy? An act of high treason this,   
and rebellion against the sovereign of the  
universe; a bold declaration, that in the  
throne we would be greater than him!

Lastly; it is the will of him who is now  
our constant observer, and will be our final  
impartial judge. And if he is witness to the  
constant rising up of our spirits against his  
government now; if he is witness to an  
unconquerable stubbornness in our wills,  
notwithstanding all the various methods of  
his providence and grace to soften us, and  
to *humble us*, and *do us good in our latter* Deut. viii.  
*end*: what sentence can we expect from his 16.  
mouth, what treatment to meet with at  
his hand then? Let us consider, that he will  
then appear the all-powerful judge; and  
that it will be impossible for us to resist him  
any longer, or escape the marks of his in-  
dignation.— This last thought is strongly  
urged in the following passage of a most  
judicious writer: “ His will shall finally Barrow,  
“ prevail, either with our will, or against V. 3. S. 4.  
“ it; either so as to bow and bend us into P. 35.  
“ true subjection, or so as to break and de-  
“ stroy us. — As to his dispensations, we  
“ may fret, we may wail, and we may  
“ murmur at them; but we cannot alter  
“ or avoid them.— As to his commands,

K

we



SERM.

VI.



“ we may lift up ourselves against them;  
 “ we may fight stoutly, and we may, in a  
 “ fort, prove conquerors: but it will be a  
 “ miserable victory, the trophies whereof  
 “ shall be erected in hell, and stand upon  
 “ the ruin of our happiness. For, while  
 “ we insult abused grace, we must, at last,  
 “ fall under incensed justice. If God can-  
 “ not fairly procure his will of us in a way  
 “ of due obedience, he will surely execute  
 “ it in a way of vengeance. He must reign  
 “ over us; if not as over his loyal subjects to  
 “ our comfort, yet as over stubborn rebels  
 “ to our confusion. For, in such a case,  
 “ this will be our doom; and these the last  
 “ words God will deign to spend upon us:  
 Lu. xix. “ *Those mine enemies, that would not that I*  
 27. “ *should reign over them, bring them hither,*  
 “ *and slay them before me.*”

And now surely, by this time, from all  
 these considerations laid together, we must  
 be fully convinced of the reasonableness and  
 wisdom of having this our prevailing tem-  
 per and governing rule in all our prayers:  
*Father! not my will, but thine be done.*

And how then can I better close this sub-  
 ject than by exhorting you and myself to go  
 from this solemnity, and resolve that, by  
 the grace of God, we will in this instance,

as

*Submission to the divine will.*

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as well as all others, endeavour to imitate SERM.  
Christ, our bright all-perfect example? VI.

Perhaps there may be some, who, because their houses and families are at present safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them, will ask: What have they to do with such a subject as this? and how can they be profited by it?—I answer: If it is not their own fault, much every way. It may be a seasonable word to them now, in the days of their health, to prepare them for sickness, and for taking all the troubles they may ever meet with well, at the divine hand. And how soon may many of us need all the benefit of this right disposition of mind? *We know not what a day may bring forth.* Prov. xxvii. 1. Many of our friends have, within the course of a few weeks, been brought into such afflictions, as to feel the necessity of such a principle. And we may be assured, that we shall be sadly at a loss for the exercise of this noble virtue in a time of trial, if we never are acquainted with it till then.

Let us all therefore be persuaded to bring our minds, as soon as possible, to an habitual resignation to the will of God; that so, in every time of need, the trouble of breaking our spirits to the discipline of heaven may be over: and we may have nothing to do, but, after the first struggle and effort

SERM. of human nature and affection is over,  
 VI. readily to comport with the dispensations  
 of Providence, and settle in a peaceful calm  
 and composure of mind.

To subserve this valuable end, let us frequently accustom ourselves to cross our own wills in lesser instances. The whole life of our blessed Saviour was a life of self-denial.

Rom. xv. In all *he pleased not himself* any other way,  
 3. than by choosing to please his heavenly Father. *He pleased not himself*; but accustomed himself to a life of humiliation and sorrow all along to the end: and then, at last, it was much easier in the nature of the thing for him to submit to death, even the death of the cross.

And to fix us more steadily in such a proper temper, I know no method so likely, as a serious solemn surrender of ourselves, and all we have and are, to God, in an act of deliberate devotion, and renewing that solemn surrender at the Lord's table. For there, in that sacred ordinance, we see, in the most lively sensible manner, what the best beloved of the Father submitted to for us. And there we behold, what a bitter cup of trembling and astonishment he drank deep of, that we might have a cup of salvation put into our unworthy hands.—And the recollection of such serious, repeated covenants



*Submission to the divine will.*

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venant engagements will have a happy tendency to correct our spirits upon the first risings of unruly passions, and keep us steady in a course of growing obedience. SERM. VI.

And if we thus go on in a regular course of willing resignation to the great Father and Lord of all in the present state of trial, we may then look forward to death itself and beyond it, and say with a true christian courage: " Though I must die, and pass through the dark valley, and drink of the cold cup, of which my Saviour drank; yet, if I am his true disciple, I shall, ere long, rise to glory, and honour, and immortality. His death was not designed to exempt his followers from dying; but only to take away the terrors of the grave, and make their passage easy through that gloomy vale. And if this is the path through which I am to follow him to his eternal kingdom, I ought, I will cheerfully acquiesce even in this appointment of heaven." It is enough to reconcile us to it to think, that, if we are true christians, death has lost his sting. He may strike his dart into our vitals, and yet not finally hurt us: but he shall rather be a welcome messenger to remove us from a state of imperfect obedience, of frailty, sin, and sorrow, from all the remainder of ungoverned passi-

**SERM.** ons, and self-will, to a state of perfect light,  
**VI.** and love, and felicity; where we shall see  
 God face to face, be perfectly conformed  
 to his moral image, and do, and submit to  
 his will in all things, as the angels do in  
 heaven.





## SERMON VII.

The love of novelty in matters of religion.

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ACTS xvii. 21.

*For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing.*

**I**N these words we have a remark, which SERM. VII. the sacred historian makes on the temper and conduct of the people at Athens, which had been a long while the seat of learning and philosophy. And the occasion of it was the treatment they gave to St. Paul; who, upon observing their gross superstition and idolatry amidst all their pretended knowledge, was kindled into a fervent zeal for the honour of God, and reasoned publicly



SERM. *in the synagogue of the Jews, and with the*  
 VII. *devout persons, and in the market (or forum)*

*the places of public resort, with them that*  
 ver. 16. *met with him, on the great and important*  
 17. *truths of natural and revealed religion. Then*  
 ver. 18. *certain of the Epicureans and of the Stoics,*

*(the former a sect of philosophers, who held that the world was made by what they called chance, or the fortuitous jumble of atoms; who denied a providence, and asserted that man's chief good consisted in sensual pleasure: while the Stoics held the world to be eternal, that all things were governed by a necessary uncontrollable fate, and vainly exalted their wise men to an equality with their gods: certain of each of these sects) encounter'd Paul; some of whom said: What will this babler, this contemptible prating man, say? others said: He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods, because he preached Jesus and the resurrection.*

v. 19, 20. *And they took him and brought him to Areopagus, (or the hill dedicated to Mars their God of war, where was the seat of their great senate) saying: May we know of thee what this new doctrine is whereof thou speakest? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears; we would know therefore, what these strange things mean. — And then follows the remark in my text: For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent*

*spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell* SERM.  
*or to hear some new thing.* VII.

And as too much of a like temper discovers itself in almost every age; I have chosen this passage to discourse to you on the love of novelty in religion, and to shew you the danger of giving up ourselves to the conduct of that passion in matters of such great, such infinite importance.

To this purpose, I shall

I. Premise some observations to prevent mistakes, and to the due stating of the subject; and then,

II. Point out to you more distinctly, wherein this faulty temper consists, and the manner in which it discovers itself.

I. I would make some previous observations which may be necessary to prevent mistakes on such a subject.

And here,

1. It may be proper to premise, that no notions or opinions in religion are to be regarded merely on account of their claim to antiquity, if they have nothing else to recommend them.

This, I believe, will appear evidently true to every considering mind. Idolatry pleaded antiquity; and it was of old spread over the  
face

SERM. face of the habitable earth, before there was  
VII. any standing written revelation at all. But  
nevertheless, is not idolatry false? Were not  
those antient notions and opinions most unworthy of God, and therefore to be rejected; and a revelation from God, on proper evidence, to be received and embraced? — And as to the schemes and notions, which fallible men may at any time have built on, or professed to deduce from, the true revelation of God, however early they may have been embraced, and how long soever they may have been supported and maintained; yet they are not to be held sacred, only on that account. — So much indeed we may think we owe to long and generally received doctrines and opinions, said to be deduced from revelation, (the christian for instance) as to inquire seriously and impartially into the foundation and ground for embracing them; and, if we find them agreeable to the word of the truth of the gospel, then to adhere to them. But if after our best search, they appear not agreeable to that word, but inconsistent with our natural and just notions of God, as an all-wise, righteous, and good governor of the world, and tending to weaken mens regards to the practical parts of true religion; they then will lose all their seeming sacredness with us, notwithstanding their having the majority on their side. Since the countenance



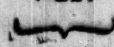
tenance and favour of the multitude is no SERM.  
more a proof of the truth of an opinion, than VII.  
is the mere antiquity of it : because for one  
man that thinks soberly and impartially,  
there are ten that take things upon trust ;  
and instead of seeing things with their own  
eyes, will yield themselves up implicitly to  
the guidance of the many that have gone  
before them.

And then the consequence from this way  
of reasoning, is on the other hand this :

2. That it can be no reasonable just ob-  
jection against any doctrine or opinion, mere-  
ly that it is but newly discovered, however  
it may be contrary to the most antient and  
venerably received maxims and traditions.

For the test and standard of all opinions  
is truth, which is invariably one and the  
same through all ages ; it is eternal.—Now  
if it should so happen, that soon after the  
means of finding and obtaining truth are  
manifested, the generality should, some how  
or other, (either by being under the in-  
fluence of prejudice, corrupt passions, or  
views of worldly interest) lose the track,  
and wander into dangerous errors : it is  
very evident, that if in after time there  
should arise some who became sensible of  
their mistake, found themselves got into a  
wrong path, and who were therefore not  
only desirous of returning out of it them-  
selves,

SERM. selves, but of recovering others out of it too ;

VII.  such persons are so far from being objects of just contempt and scorn, that they ought to be valued and esteemed as the great friends of truth, and of mankind ; and, instead of being slighted and discouraged, merit the highest attention and regard from their fellow creatures.

Let me illustrate this observation by an instance, in which I believe you will all agree : and that is the reformation from popery.— For how long a time had a large part of the world lain under that gross darkness and shadow of death ? So long, that the rulers of that darkness pleaded the sacredness of it ; and made the pretended antiquity of its abominable errors and corruptions of pure christianity an argument of their being its true and genuine doctrines. Now when those few excellent persons, who first discovered these gross superstitions and corruptions, thought it their duty to oppose them at all hazards, and to preach up the plain simple doctrines of christianity as contained in the new testament, that fountain of sound truth ; do we blame them, because they started something which to that age seemed new and surprizing ? Do we censure them as headstrong and ungovernable, and violaters of the peace of the church ? No ; we admire their courage, zeal, and disinterested

rested regards for the honour of God; and SERM.  
the religion of his dear Son. And, being VII.  
free from the superstitions and prejudices of  
popery, we rejoice in the protestant religion  
as the only true one; though popery had  
been the established religion for some hun-  
dreds of years before.

Now the same arguments, which vindicate  
a reformation from popery, and the endea-  
vouring to bring back the worship of God to  
the standard of scripture; will also vindicate  
all after endeavours to bring all doctrines to  
the same only true standard, to be received  
or rejected, as they appear agreeable, or  
contrary to that. And in such a course of  
trial, it is not at all an improbable supposi-  
tion, that some notions which may for a long  
time have had the stamp of human autho-  
rity, of councils and synods, may be found  
wanting, and not true sterling when brought  
to this touch-stone: and others, which may  
have been censured as novel and base, may  
be found true gold; and only a new disco-  
very of those real truths, which had been  
for a long while buried under the rubbish  
of prevailing error, and gross superstition.

I observe once more,

3. That the love of novelty is not, in it-  
self, to be reckoned criminal.

It is, on the contrary, justly observed to be

to motion in violent logbut ed of a. p the  
noisier



SERM.

VII.

Grove's  
works,  
Vol. 10.  
p. 321.  
&c.

the growth of the human nature, and peculiarly adapted to the present state. "To me (says an ingenious writer) "it seems impossible, that a reasonable creature should rest absolutely satisfied with any acquisition whatever, without endeavouring farther. "For, after its highest improvements, the mind hath an idea of an infinity of things still behind worth knowing, to the knowledge of which therefore it cannot be indifferent; as by climbing up an ascent in the midst of a large plain, a man has his prospect enlarged, and, together with that, the bounds of his desires.—And the useful purposes which this love of novelty may serve in the present state are not a few: "it contributes not a little to the improvement of knowledge and learning; there is an uncommon pleasure annexed to the first appearance of truth, that makes men willing to undergo the most fatiguing disquisitions in order to acquire it; this passion serves also to annihilate all the little distinctions among mankind; and seems to be one proof of a future state."

These observations being premised, I proceed

II. To point out to you wherein the indulging this passion, the love of novelty, is to be judged faulty in matters of religion,

religion, and the manner in which it SERM.  
expresses itself. VII.

There is indeed this general disadvantage arising from it; that we are, without extraordinary care, in constant danger of being so eager after something new, as not to allow ourselves time for attending to what we have been sometime acquainted with, so far as to enter into proper disquisitions about it. Now to apply this to matters of religion:

1. The love of novelty then is faulty, when it makes us so eager after every opinion which appears new to us, that we will not give ourselves time for examining and thoroughly entering into the truths we are already acquainted with.

As it is a capacity for religion which is the distinguishing excellence of mankind; so it is man's indispensable duty to employ his rational powers and faculties in enquiring after God his Maker, and to the important purposes of religion. And that he may be fixed and established in religion, a man must enquire into the grounds and reasons of his religion, and endeavour to fix himself in the truth on the most solid and substantial principles. — But now, a person under the influence of that faulty temper I am describing, will not give himself leisure for examining into matters, nor attending

to

SERM. to the force of that evidence, which the plain  
 VII. and obvious truths of the gospel bring: but  
 having heard and been superficially acquainted with them for a while, and finding them still the same, he drops all farther inquiry; and from a thirst after something else, gives himself up an easy prey to every one, who by pretended science would attempt to mislead him. And by such a temper persons are led, before they are aware, to turn universal sceptics, and throw up all religion.

And is there not too much of this passion prevailing in a faulty manner among the professors of religion in our day? Does it not discover itself by their behaviour on every sabbath? What is their principal business and design in attending publick preaching? Is it not to be entertained, as they call it, by hearing something which they never heard before? or to have their fancies and imaginations stored with some fresh ideas, that may furnish out matter for amusing conversation; rather than to be established in the truth already known? Why else do they rove from church to church, from one end of the city to another, without staying long enough in any to fix themselves so far, as to answer the great end of gospel-ministrations on themselves, their growing improvement in serious practical godliness? And if any thing detains them longer to one  
 con-



congregation than another, it is the name SERM.  
and popularity of the preacher : till having VII.  
gone their round, and finding nothing new, ~~~~~  
they will grow weary of their public attendance ; and by degrees neglect and despise it as unprofitable ; because no longer amusing and entertaining.-- Thus fickle and inconstant are men in religion, when they will not allow themselves time to attend to and feel the force of its proper evidence.—But

2. This love of novelty shews itself more faulty still, when after persons have on their first acquaintance with christianity examined into the evidences of it, and found them satisfactory, yet they grow weary of them, and are ready to give them up, merely for something more novel and surprizing.

The doctrine of the gospel has been preached for above 1700 years already. But its antiquity is no argument against the truth of it, because it has been confirmed by the fullest and strongest evidences. And with such evidences it comes recommended to us.

This doctrine, *which at first was spoken by* Heb. ii.  
*the Lord, and was afterwards confirmed by* 3. 4.  
*them that heard him ; God also himself being witness with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost : this doctrine, as a doctrine according to godliness,* 1 Tim.  
*is the same which is now preached unto* vi. 3.  
*you. And as we are born in a christian*

L

land,

SERM. land, and brought acquainted with the na-

VII. ture and design of this doctrine betimes, at

our first attentive acquaintance with it we appear, it may be, very much struck and affected. But as persons grow up in life, and their passions begin to cool; if their judgments and hearts are not brought under the due practical influence of the great truths of the gospel, after having heard them for a long time, they will become dull and heavy, tasteless and insipid. Now from what does this change of temper arise but from the novelty of the subject ceasing by their long continued acquaintance with it; and the passion for novelty being suffered to run wild, and not being brought into its right direction?

One would think, indeed, that there is that in the gospel-discovery, which should for ever keep the human mind awake, lively and serious; that as the subject and matter of it will be the pleasing contemplation of angels and perfected spirits to eternity, it should have a proportionable influence on the spirits of men on earth: and so indeed it hath on all serious and devout minds. But as the great objects of the christian faith are far distant, as the motives of it are fetched principally from another world; so flesh and sense cloud the mind here, and too much prevent its being influenced by any thing truly

truly spiritual, or but what, at best, amuses SERM.  
and beguiles the understanding. And there- VII.  
fore the generality, when they have lost  
the surprize, which was raised in their  
minds on their first acquaintance with  
the gospel, by the frequency of their  
attendance on it, they have no farther in-  
clination to it, and are ready to exchange  
it for the first new and pleasing scheme  
that presents itself; ready to be carried about Eph. iv.  
by every wind of doctrine, and cunning craf- 14.  
tiness of them that lie in wait to deceive.

Hence arises an indifference and coldness  
to the stated ministrations of the gospel, and  
those truths which were at first received with  
much affection and apparent seriousness of  
mind; as well as a dislike to those who mi-  
nister them, and who were once received  
by them as angels of God: nay, if an angel  
indeed should come from heaven, and  
preach with all the zeal, and life, and fer-  
vour of a seraph among persons of this tem-  
per, though he might be equally followed  
and crowded after at first; yet if he went  
on year after year only preaching the same  
gospel, the same plain rule of faith and  
practice, without bringing forth, every now  
and then, some new and strange discovery  
to make them gaze and wonder, I am apt  
to think his congregation would grow thin,  
and his once admiring hearers wish for a  
L 2 change,



SERM. change, or by degrees *forsake the assembling*  
 VII. *themselves together* under him. And why

Heb. x. 25. should this supposition be thought strange :  
 when a greater than an angel, even he

Jo. vii. 46. whom all the angels of God worship, even  
 the Son of God himself, came into this

world of ours, and *spake so as never man*  
*spake*, such words, and with such authority,  
 as none could but himself ; and yet even  
 he, though admired, and wondered at at  
 first, yet, when by his frequent ministrations,  
 the design and tendency of his doctrine  
 became more known, and appeared  
 one and the same, even to spiritualize mens  
 hearts and affections, and to direct their  
 practice, many of his hearers grew weary

Jo. vi. 66. of him ; *many of his disciples* went quite a-  
 way, and *walked no more with him* ? He was  
 slighted in his own country, and among his  
 acquaintance ; and his preaching was less  
 regarded by them, only because he lived a-  
 mong them, and had been longer known by  
 them. It is true, indeed, that as often as

V. Mat.  
 xiii. 54,  
 &c.

he wrought a miracle, the people attended ;  
 but it was the wonder and the novelty en-  
 gaged them, and therefore when they grew  
 weary of his doctrine alone, they called for  
 fresh miracles to entertain them ; which,  
 had they been granted as often as they called  
 for them, their commonness would have  
 soon made them quite disregarded.—But,

3. This

3. This love of novelty in matters of religion is faulty, when men are eager after new notions and opinions, only for mere speculation and amusement, without proposing any valuable end to themselves by their acquaintance with them. SERM. VII.

This was the temper of the Athenians.— They desired to hear Paul on those new topics, Jesus and the resurrection. One would at first think this was very proper. And so no doubt it would have been; provided this desire came from honest and good hearts, willing to receive and embrace truth on sufficient conviction, and to practice accordingly. For the knowledge of Jesus had a natural tendency to engage them to receive him as the great prophet and teacher sent from God, and to urge men to that steady obedience which his laws required. And the belief of the doctrine of the resurrection was designed to excite men so to live in the body; that when they come to a re-union with it, and to *receive according to* 2 Cor. v. 10. *what they have done in it*, it may be good, and not evil. But alas! they only wanted to hear these things because they were strange things, and what had never been preached to them before: and when their curiosity was satisfied, (though the apostle backed his discourse with all the force of argument) they rejected him, despised his

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preach-

SERM. preaching, and turned off with the same  
 VII. triflingly inquisitive temper to something  
 else.

Thus when persons grow weary of the plain known truths of the gospel, such as death, and judgment, heaven, and hell, and the motives urged to excite us to avoid the one, and to be ready for the other; the doctrine of the Mediator, and the great end and design of his coming; and are ever restless and uneasy, till they hear some new speculation or matter of doubtful disputation started, which in itself is of no importance, or which may have a bad tendency as to them, by filling them with pride and self-conceit, and a falsely pretended knowledge: such a desire is faulty.—For a person to desire to know more of the mind and will of God, to have a clearer and fuller understanding of the revelation given to him, in order the better to direct his temper and practice, that he may walk more closely and humbly with his God, and be more diligent, and abounding in his service; this is a most commendable and worthy ambition. But to forsake the plain known leading truths of the gospel, and treat them as only fit for children; to become more and more indifferent to duty, and to give one's self up to vain imaginations, and indulge a restless inquiry after nothing but what may amuse, astonish, and surprize,  
 without



without any tendency to make us truly wiser **SERM.**  
 or better ; this argues a loose and wanton **VII.**  
 mind, and a spirit too much estranged from   
 God, and averse to solid substantial practical  
 goodness. Such persons as these St. Paul  
 foretells would arise, and describes them in  
 this manner : *The time will come when men* <sup>2 Tim. iv.</sup>  
*will not be able to endure sound doctrine,* i. e. 3. 4:  
 as he calls it elsewhere, *the words of our* <sup>Comp.</sup>  
*Lord Jesus Christ, the words of truth and so-* <sup>1 Tim. vi.</sup>  
*berness, the doctrine which is according to god-* <sup>3.</sup>  
*liness ; but having itching ears, will heap to*  
*themselves teachers after their own lusts : and*  
*they shall turn away their ears from the truth,*  
*and shall be turned unto fables.*

Thus have I gone through the heads I  
 proposed to enlarge on ; and I would now  
 close the subject with a serious application.

Let me then desire you to admit this  
 question, to put it seriously to yourselves,  
 (those of you especially who may only have  
 attended here occasionally) and ask : What  
 is it that has brought you here this day ?  
 You have heard that when no less a person  
 than the apostle Paul, nay, an infinitely  
 greater than Paul, even Jesus his Master  
 and Lord, preached, many of his hearers  
 attended only out of curiosity, to be enter-  
 tained with some new thing, and not to be  
 doers of the word. And was this the case

SERM. with the Master himself, and his first disciples? And is there not greater reason to fear, it may be the same with the hearers of only common ministers in later ages? Have not we too much reason to suspect, that among those who attend in our worshipping assemblies too many come out of mere curiosity, and love of novelty, only to hear what shall be said; without any regard to the great end and design of a gospel ministry, the bettering their hearts, and directing their lives? Does not this appear, as I hinted before, by their unfixed fickle temper, roving continually about from one place of worship to another, without settling in any; and by the lightness and carelessness of their behaviour while they attend? And is this *all* that has brought any here? If it is; as you must find yourselves quite disappointed in your aims, so I heartily wish you may stand reprov'd and corrected for such low and unworthy ends, such mean and childish designs.

Consider, first, is it fit that the eternal God should contrive so glorious a scheme as that of the gospel, that he should send even his own Son into the world to publish it, and thus to reveal a way to fallen apostate creatures for their recovery, salvation, and eternal happiness; and all this only to amuse  
and

and surprize mankind a while with the novelty of the discovery, and then to have it slighted and disregarded, and the grand import of it overlooked? Shall he continue the ministrations of the gospel from age to age with a design that it should reach the consciences of men, soften and melt their hearts, and win them to holiness and universal obedience, that they may be safe and happy for ever? And shall they be attended on only as matters of entertainment, and be rejected as unprofitable, if they do not always furnish matter for gratifying a vain curiosity?—If this has been the temper and conduct of any *here*, in times past; let them remember their faults and their follies this day, and be heartily ashamed of them: and be assured, that it has been through the prevalence of this faulty temper, this wrong turned passion, that they have got no good from the ordinances of the gospel, but remain altogether barren and unfruitful still; and let them be persuaded, from henceforward, to think and act in a different manner.

Let it be your diligent care then to get as just and clear notions of our holy religion as you can from your bibles, and to be convinced of the fulness of the evidence there is for the truth of it. And then let these plain and clear truths and principles be what you



SERM. you abide by, and adhere to, at all times,  
 VII. and amidst the various turns and changes of  
 the passions of weak and fallible, and vain  
 men.—*Be not carried about with divers and  
 strange doctrines, but labour to have your  
 hearts established with grace, in the grace of*

Heb. xiii. the gospel : this is eminently the *good thing*,  
 9. saith St. Paul. Let not every new opinion  
 immediately captivate your hearts : but first  
 try all things by the standard of the word,  
 1 Thess. v. and *hold fast* nothing but what you find  
 21. to be really *good* ; good to make you wiser and  
 better in order to your eternal salvation. And  
 then you will guard effectually against eve-  
 ry notion, or topic of dispute, which may  
 be started only to puzzle and perplex the  
 mind, and draw it off from the more prac-  
 tical parts of christianity, to empty spe-  
 culation ; and especially against those no-  
 tions which may weaken your regards to  
 holiness, however pleasing they may appear  
 to corrupt inclinations and passions : and will  
 keep on in the plain good old path of faith  
 and obedience, wherein all the excellent of  
 the earth have travelled on to heaven, and  
 are got safe thither before you ; and let no-  
 thing tempt you to turn aside either to the  
 right hand or to the left.

I would not be mistaken. And indeed  
 I hope I have already said enough in this  
 discourse to show that I am not against the  
 endea-

endeavour to improve the understanding by SERM.  
an encreasing knowledge of, and acquaint- VII.  
ance with divine truths. No; this every  
one should be solicitous of, as the most or-  
namental, as well as profitable and useful  
knowledge: and there are such stores and  
treasures of divine wisdom and knowledge  
in the gospel scheme, that every upright  
serious christian may see new wonders con-  
tinually arising upon his repeated searches  
into it, and rewarding his most laborious  
and diligent enquiries; since even *angels* 1 Pet. 3.  
*desire to look into these things* for the improve- 12.  
ment of their knowledge, and most exalted  
excellent understandings.—But all that I am  
cautioning against is, not to let a vain cu-  
riosity be your principal director and guide  
in religion, or the great end of your attend-  
ance on christian institutions; because you  
will be in great danger of having done with  
it, when the novelty of your profession and  
your curiosity is over, or turned to some-  
thing else. Nor let any imaginary schemes  
or inventions of men, which are unprof-  
itable in themselves, so far get possession of  
you, as to draw away your minds and hearts  
from the principal design of the gospel in-  
stitution. For be assured, if you only re-  
gard christianity as a science, a matter of  
mere empty speculation, it will be of no  
advan-

SERM. advantage to you ; nay, it will be infinitely  
 VII. better for you not to have known it at all :  
 because the great end of it will be lost upon  
 2 Pet. ii. you, and so your *latter end will be worse*  
 20. *than your beginning.*

Let it then be the principal care of all, your chief concern, your highest ambition, to bring your hearts under the power of the gospel. And to this end, endeavour to fix and join yourselves to some one religious assembly of christians or another where you think you may attend best to your spiritual edification ; and keep steady to it, without giving way to a roving and wandering disposition. And let the great and only end of your coming thither from time to time, be the improving your souls in holiness and a growing conformity to God ; that the divine life may be strengthening in you continually. Always be more solicitous to have your heart warmed with the great important truths of religion, than your ears charmed and entertained with the most pleasing sounds. And remember, that if  
 Ja. i. 22. you are *bearers of the word only, and not doers of it, you deceive your own souls.* Come to the public instructions with an humble and teachable mind ; and look up to God  
 Ps. cxix. with all fervency of devotion, saying : *Open*  
 18, 80. *thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law ; and make my heart sound*



*in thy statutes, that I be not ashamed.*—And thus SERM.  
you shall find your good understanding in VII.  
the fear of the Lord continually encreasing;   
and you will, by your continued attendance  
on the means of grace, be advancing near-  
er and nearer to a perfection in holiness;  
and may with pleasure look forward to that  
new and happy world, where your know-  
ledge, your love, and your sublime plea-  
sures, shall be encreasing to eternity.





SERMON VIII.

On our LORD's conference with a  
jewish scribe.

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MARK xii. 34. former part.

*And when Jesus saw that he answered  
discreetly, he said unto him : Thou  
art not far from the kingdom of  
God.--*

SERM. VIII. **T**HE person to whom our blessed  
Lord said this, and the particular oc-  
casion of it, together with the several cir-  
cumstances attending the conversation, we  
learn at large from the preceding verses. It  
may not therefore be improper for us to go  
over the whole account distinctly, from the  
28th verse, in order to our more clear and  
profitable enlargement on this passage of  
scripture.

SERMON

Here

Here then we may observe, that the SERM.  
 Sadducees and Pharisees were the two chief VIII.  
 sects among the Jews at this time; directly  
 opposite to one another in several of their sen-  
 timents, and each equally zealous to sup-  
 port their own party, to the weakening the  
 other. *The Sadducees believed no resurrec-*  
*tion, nor future state, nor angel, nor spirit;* Act. xxiii. 8.  
*but the Pharisees believed them all.* Now when  
 the Pharisees found that *Jesus had answered*  
*the Sadducees well, and put them to silence, one*  
*of their scribes (or doctors and expounders*  
*of the law of Moses) came and asked him:* ver. 28.  
*Which is the first commandment of all?* This Comp.  
 question he asked to try our Saviour's know- Matt.  
 ledge in the law, if not also to entangle him xxii.  
 in his discourse. But Jesus gave such an an-  
 swer, as at once convinced him of his superior  
 wisdom, and prevented all further attempts  
 of a like nature. *Jesus answered him: The* verse  
*first of all the commandments is: Hear, O* 29-34  
*Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. And*  
*thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy*  
*heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy*  
*mind, and with all thy strength: this is the*  
*first commandment. And the second is like,*  
*namely, this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as*  
*thyself: there is none other commandment*  
*greater than these. And the scribe answered:*  
*Well, Master; thou hast said the truth: for*  
*there is one God, and there is none other but*  
 He.



SERM. He. And to love him with all the heart, and  
 VIII. with all the understanding, and with all the  
 soul, and with all the strength, and to love his  
 neighbour as himself, is more than all burnt-  
 offerings and sacrifices.—And when Jesus saw  
 that he answered discreetly, he said unto him,  
 Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.

By the kingdom of God here we are to under-  
 stand the gospel dispensation; that scheme  
 of wisdom and grace, which was the con-  
 trivance of God the Father, and published  
 by his Son in our nature, in order to form  
 and prepare the children of men in this  
 world for the kingdom of his glory in hea-  
 ven above. And when our blessed Lord  
 told the scribe that he was not far from the  
 kingdom of God, it is as if he had said to  
 him: "You do not want much of being  
 fit for one of my disciples, and becoming  
 truly such: preserve this temper and  
 disposition of mind; and you are well pre-  
 pared to receive my gospel, to be a true  
 member of the church of God on earth,  
 and, persevering in such a temper, for  
 his kingdom in glory hereafter."

From the words thus explained, in con-  
 nection with the whole passage of scripture,  
 to which they belong, and which I shall in-  
 clude, there are several useful observa-  
 tions which may be drawn for our instruc-  
 tion

tion and improvement in true religion and virtue. SERM. VIII.

The first is this :

- I. That the foundation of all true religion has been one and the same from the beginning, through all the several representations of it to mankind. And what is that, but the unity of God ? That there is one God ; a Being self-existent, possessed of all possible perfections, the Maker of all things visible and invisible ; and that there is none other but he.

This was the fundamental truth of natural religion, and which mankind might have concluded, even from that unity of design which appeared in all the works of his hands ; that they were the effects of one all-wise and almighty agent. It was, when men forsook the true light of nature, neglected, or extinguished the candle of the Lord lighted up within them, that *their foolish heart became darkened, and they* Rom. i. *became vain in their imaginations*, so as to <sup>21.</sup> depart from the unity of God, introduce Polytheism ; and sink into the grossest idolatry.

This truth was at the foundation of the patriarchal religion. Every extraordinary  
M appear-

SERM. appearance of God to those good men was  
 VIII. designed by him to strengthen and support  
 their faith in himself, as the only living and  
 true God; and so to engage them constantly  
 to seek, and to adhere to him alone, as  
 the only proper object of their supreme  
 worship and veneration.

When it pleased God to collect the Jews,  
 the descendants of Abraham, into one body  
 as a people, and to favour them with a  
 standing revelation; separating them hereby  
 from all the idolatrous nations of the world,  
 for the preservation of true religion: this  
 was laid as the foundation, and proclaimed  
 as a first principle to them, by their law-  
 giver, and in such a manner as to challenge  
 their attention and regard: *Hear, O Israel,*  
 Deut. vi. *the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt*  
 4. 5. *love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, &c.*  
 which is only a repetition of the first com-  
 mandment given by this God, by Jehovah  
 himself, when it was pronounced in awful  
 Exod. xx. majesty, on mount Sinai: *Thou shalt have no*  
 3. *other gods before me.*

And when God's last and most perfect  
 state of religion was to take place; (that dis-  
 pensation which was calculated for the uni-  
 versal benefit of mankind, and to which the  
 Jewish was introductory, and which was  
 to be published by his own Son in the hu-  
 man nature) we see here, that the foundation  
 of



of it is laid in the same general principle, SERM.  
the unity of God. And we find that upon VIII,  
this scribe, in my text, asking Jesus, *which* was the first and great commandment; he, (instead of making void the law, the moral law, establishes it by laying this as the foundation of all, and) answers in the words of Moses: *Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord*; and him alone are we to reverence and worship, love and obey.

And this leads us to another observation :

II. That piety, or a governing regard to this one only living and true God, is the first and principal thing in all that can be called religion, or even morality.

This lies next to the very foundation itself; and there can be no superstructure that will stand well together now, much less abide when the storms arise, and the floods come and beat upon the house, where this is wanting. Therefore our Lord most truly said, and enforced it with his authority: ver. 29.  
*This is the first and great commandment; to love the Lord our God with all our heart,* Compare Mat. xxii.  
*and with all our mind, and with all our soul,* 38.  
*and with all our strength.* In which form of expression we are to understand that all the powers and faculties of the human mind are required to be united, the whole entire man to

SERM. be devoted to this one only living and true  
 VIII. God. The whole of which leading duty is  
 included, by our Saviour here, in *love to*  
*God*; the most proper and full representation that he could give of it, who came into  
 our world in our nature, to manifest the  
 love and good will of God his Father to us  
 in the most astonishing manner. What so  
 proper and lovely an idea could he give us  
 of our duty to God, as to shew it forth to us  
 as all only a return of love to him, who had  
 sent his only beloved Son to us on a mes-  
 sage of the kindest grace, and of overflow-  
 ing compassion? This love to God, ex-  
 pressing itself in grateful sentiments and  
 acknowledgments; of his goodness, in acts  
 of worship, adoration, and chearful doing  
 his will, as far as made known to us; this  
 Rom.xiii. *love to God (I say) is the fulfilling of the*  
 10. *law*, of this most weighty and principal mat-  
 ter of the law, the duty we owe our Maker.

Our love to our neighbour is not super-  
 seded, indeed, by this. That is as necessary  
 in its place, as the love of God is in its own.  
 But then let it always be remembered, that  
 ver. 31. it is *the second commandment*. Not therefore  
 to be dispensed with, because it is not the  
 first; since it is very like it, and naturally  
 flows from it: but neither for that reason,  
 because it is the second, to be put in the  
 room of the first, so as to exclude that.

I wish

I wish this were more considered by the SERM.  
generality than it commonly is. We live VIII.  
in an age of great benevolence and charity; {  
and because both natural religion and revelation oblige us to exercise these virtues, too many are apt to place all religion only in being kind, and good-natured, friendly and obliging, and compassionate to our fellow-creatures. But surely this is a great mistake. For we, as subjects of religion, have not only to do with our fellow-creatures, but eminently and principally with God; and unless our regards to men flow from our superior regards to him, our morality will be defective in its main spring; it will want the truest excellence of virtue, and receive all its praise, and its reward, here. The man that thus contracts the circle of his duties, and thinks he is perfect in keeping the commandments of God, only because he is kind and benevolent to his fellow-creatures, is full as inconsistent as he would be, who should satisfy himself with giving all his neighbours around him their due, without ever paying any regards or acknowledgements to the common landlord.

But to proceed: We may observe farther,

III. That these moral duties are intrin-

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sically



SERM.  
VIII.

ically more excellent, than all ritual and ceremonial observances.

ver. 32.  
33.

This we gather from the answer which the scribe made to our Lord, and which he approved in the words of the text: *Master, Thou hast said the truth; and to love the one God with all the heart, and understanding, and soul, and strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.*

And the reason is plain: because the obligation to the practice of these moral duties arises from the nature and fitness of things, and the several relations between God and such beings as we are, and between us and those of the same nature with ourselves; and would have always been our duty, whether any express command had been given about them or not, as long as those relations subsisted. And the complying with this obligation, and performing these duties, hath in its own nature a tendency to improve the human mind, to raise it to its proper dignity, and prepare it for its truest and noblest happiness. Whereas the obligation to ritual and ceremonial observances is not from any intrinsic excellence in those rites and ceremonies themselves, but is derived solely from the authority of the law-giver, who appoints them: which, though

though sufficient to oblige all who acknowledge that authority to a careful compliance with them, yet does by no means, however, set them upon a level with the other. SERM. VIII.

Whole burnt-offerings, and various sacrifices were appointed by God to be offered by the Jews; and they, as his people, were obliged to bring those sacrifices: but the value of these offerings did not consist so much in the offerings themselves, as in the obedience to the positive appointments of God, who, for wise reasons best known to himself, had thought proper to require them. Exclusive of a divine appointment, it would have been a matter quite indifferent in itself, whether they had presented any sacrifices or not; nay, they could not know, that they would be acceptable. But this can never be said of the great commandments of loving God and our neighbour; because these can never be indifferent things, but oblige us from our very nature, and our frame. And these right moral dispositions accompanying the offerings were ever necessary to their being even then acceptable to God. Where these were wanting, the most costly sacrifices, and whole burnt-offerings, were rejected with detestation and abhorrence. And to substitute these rituals, in the room of moral duties, and endeavour, by a scrupulous ex-

V. Isa. l.  
11, &c.  
Ibid. c.  
lxvi.  
1-3.

SERM. actness in compliance with them, to make  
 VIII. up for notorious violations of the former;  
 was a most daring affront to the God of  
 truth and righteousness.

Again; let it be observed,

IV. That they, who, under a former dispensation, understood and approved the great and leading principles of all true religion, appeared most ready for the gospel, and most likely to become soon the disciples of Christ.

This is implied in our Lord's reply in my text.—*When Jesus perceived that the scribe answered discreetly, or with an understanding mind, he said unto him: Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.*

Eph. ii.  
 12.

The Gentiles, who were sunk into the grossest idolatry, superstition and vice, were the farthest from the kingdom of God; not only as being *aliens from the common wealth of Israel*, but as they were strangers to the knowledge of the true God, and the duties of all true religion: so that more was requisite to prepare them than others for receiving the gospel-doctrine; even to have their understandings first informed, and to be brought to right and just notions of God. And as for the Jews, though they indeed

lived



lived within the pale of the true church of SERM. 2  
God, and were favoured with a revelation VIII.  
of his nature and mind and will; yet   
their teachers had so corrupted and made  
void the law through their own traditions  
and false glosses, that they had perverted the  
design of it; so that many of their learned  
men had so sadly degenerated as to make it  
a question, (and it was strongly debated among  
them) which was the *first*, the *greatest com-* ver. 28.  
*mandment*, the moral or ceremonial? These  
therefore must be set right in this most im-  
portant point, and convinced what truth  
was; or they could never submit to a reli-  
gion, the great design of which was to esta-  
blish true piety and morality on the most  
noble foundations, and to put an end to  
the observance of the former ceremonial  
law. Such as these were therefore at some  
considerable distance from the kingdom of  
God.—But as for those who saw and ap-  
proved the great doctrines of the love of  
God, and their neighbour, and acknow-  
ledged them to be the principal things in  
all true religion; they seemed to be next to  
those who were indeed the disciples of  
Christ, and who had actually entered into  
that kingdom of God set up by him, which  
had these doctrines as the basis and foun-  
dation of it. These were so far prepared  
for that further instruction, which Jesus, as  
a divine

SERM. a divine teacher, came to give them ; and  
 VIII. one would expect to hear, that they had all  
 readily embraced his offer, and became his  
 disciples.

Phil. i.  
 10.

Such a one, probably, was this scribe in my text. Whatever was his end and design in putting his question to our Lord ; this is certain, that his reply to him show'd, that he had the most just notions of things, and that his judgment *approved the things that were most excellent*. Whether he did, hereupon, enter the kingdom of God, and become Christ's disciple indeed, we cannot tell ; there being no farther account of him. — Perhaps he did ; and, if he did, it is highly probable, he made a great proficiency in the christian school, in proportion to the preparedness of his mind before hand. If he did not, but after all went away as others did, and continued in that state ; it was not for want of light and understanding in his head, but from some other very faulty cause.

And so, in every age of the world, where there is such a competent knowledge of the great things of God, and a just sense and notion of truth and duty, such a mind is capable of receiving more clearly and fully the truth as it is in Jesus ; and will, where the heart is honest and sincere, readily receive

ceive and embrace it, when proposed to it **SERM.**  
in a proper manner. **VIII.**

And this leads me to observe farther:

V. That in order to be the true subjects of the kingdom of God here, and to partake hereafter of all the great and glorious blessings of that kingdom, the best notions alone are not sufficient; but the chief thing is the right and good disposition of the heart.

It is the bowing the soul in obedience to the divine commands, which is the life and soul of all true religion; without this the most exact and perfect knowledge will not render any one a sincere disciple of Christ. The heart must readily submit to the first and great commandment of all, the love of God, and suffer itself to be brought under the power and influence of that precept; and shew this due love to him in all the proper ways of expressing it, in devotion, veneration, gratitude, resignation, and unreserved sincere obedience.— Otherwise, if the light in our understandings do not purify and warm our hearts, we shall be never really the better for the rectitude of our judgments, and the propriety of our apprehensions.

How forcible and affecting is that address of the apostle James! and how properly



SERM. perly may it be introduced here? *Thou*  
 VIII. *believest that there is one God: thou doest*  
 well.— *The devils also believe and tremble.*

cap. ii.  
 19, 20.

Those miserable accursed spirits have as just notions of the being and perfections of God, and as clear apprehensions of the truths of religion, as can be supposed to be among men; and yet they are at the farthest distance from the kingdom of God, and can never enter into it. What is the reason of this? Why *the devils* only know and *believe*; but they cannot love and obey. And for want of this disposition, (which shews their horrid, unconquerable malignity) *they tremble* under the weight of those truths, which you, my fellow-christians, believe, and we preach, as fastening down their guilt and punishment upon them.—Awful thought!—And wilt thou then know, from hence, O vain man, that *faith without works is dead*? that knowledge without practice is of no real avail in the sight of God, or of Jesus, who  
 ib. ver. 26. best knew the Father? *For as the body without the spirit (or soul) is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*

Learn hence, what is generally the reason, why so many, who appear not far from the kingdom of God, yet never enter in; why so  
 A&T. xxvi. many are only *almost*, but not *altogether*  
 28, 29. christians. — Those, who, by the prepara-  
 tions

tions of their understandings, and their just **SERM.**  
notions of the great and leading principles **VIII.**  
of all true religion, one would think were   
most ready to receive and embrace the gospel; yet do any of these, after all, reject it, and refuse its offers? May it not fairly be questioned, whether their hearts are as right as their heads? What can it be owing to, but a vain self-sufficiency, a wrapping themselves up, as it were, in their own present knowledge, or an unwillingness to stoop to, the additional informations of the gospel, (which convey a knowledge peculiarly fit for them to receive as sinners) and to bend their wills to the full obedience to all its precepts? — And for a like reason it is, that many, called christians, are but almost, and not altogether such, because they boggle at a full compliance with the terms of the gospel covenant. They would pick and chuse for themselves, out of its requirements; and where they suit their own tempers and inclinations most, there they will fix: so far shall, with them, be christianity, and hitherto will they go, but no farther. — And for that reason, instead of bringing christianity down to them, (that is beyond their power;) they remain at too great a distance from that, to find it of any real, solid benefit and advantage to them.

SERM.

VIII.

VI. What a pity is it, that ever any of those, who were once *not far from the kingdom of God*, should not enter in, and become its willing chosen subjects?

Eph. ii.  
12.

I pity the man of reason and knowledge, that will not bow his heart to the obedience of faith! I pity the friendly, sociable, good-natured man, that lives *without God in the world*; and am sorry he is likely, at farthest, to get but half way to heaven! Ah! of what avail will be these advantages of understanding or temper; unless they are suffered to take their full direction; and to carry the whole soul with all its powers to God, and to center in the glorious gospel of the blessed Jesus? What a pity, that the pride of the heart should thwart the proper dictates of the rational mind; or that the falsehood and wickedness of the heart should spoil and destroy all the professed submission of the soul! For a man to exclude himself from the privileges of the kingdom of God in this world, and so bar his own entrance into that kingdom above, only because he will not proceed throughout upon those principles which he has made his boast and his glory hitherto, and thus far; and for another to lose heaven at last, only because he would not comply with all the conditions for heaven here! O how shocking the thought!

Especially



Especially if we consider, in the last VIII.  
place,

VII. That to lose all the blessings of the kingdom of God, after having been once so near them, will be no small aggravation of mens punishment and misery hereafter.

Better, infinitely better, to have perished from the way of life, in ignorance, and without the just and true knowledge of God; than, having that full knowledge and clear understanding of him, and the leading principles of our duty and obligations to him, to sink at last; and as it were from the very gate of heaven, to be excluded that blissful region of perfect knowledge and rectitude. *Better infinitely better, never <sup>2</sup> Pet. ii. to have known the ways of righteousness at <sup>21.</sup> all, than, having known them, not to walk in them, but to turn aside into the road of eternal perdition!* And this will certainly be the final issue of things. For if men are not the sincere disciples of Christ now, they can never be owned as his friends and favourites at last. If they reject his gospel, and refuse to be beholden to the important discoveries of it now, they cannot expect that despised gospel will plead for them then. — And then, how keen will be their reflections! how aggravated their misery!

With

SERM.

VIII.

Matt. xi.  
21—24.

With this thought did our Lord upbraid those cities where he had wrought all his mighty works, as well as preached all his most excellent and improving doctrine, but had laboured among them in vain. *Wo unto thee Chorazin! Wo unto thee Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which have been done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they had repented long ago sitting in sackcloth and ashes! And thou Capernaum which art (by thy external privileges) exalted up to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell! For it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, for Tyre and Sidon, than for you!*

What then remains, for the close of this subject, but that we all be persuaded heartily to become the true, sincere disciples of Christ, as ever we would be the better for his gospel now, and for ever?—We profess not only to receive and acknowledge the great fundamental truths of religion in general, but to receive them as delivered in the gospel of Jesus. We are entered into the kingdom of God on earth by profession, and have bound ourselves to be the subjects of it. Let us live up to this character. We profess to know God, to know our obligations to him. Let us live in a constant practical acknowledgment of them. Let us live as those who know and feel the force of these  
great

great indispensable obligations. Let us love SERM.  
him with all our hearts, and with all our VIII.  
souls; and show the strength and sincerity  
of that love by a cheerful, unreserved obe-  
dience. For God's sake, if we call ourselves  
christians, let us, above all things, dread to  
leave piety, and a course of habitual devotion  
and worship of the Deity, out of our reli-  
gion! In vain shall we boast that we are  
guilty of no vice, though possibly we may  
not be chargeable with intemperance, or  
debauchery; we are notoriously defective  
here. For this is in reality the greatest vice  
of all. It is the vice of the mind and spirit,  
and arises from an inward secret aversion to  
God. And while that remains, *publicans* Mat. xxi  
and *harlots* (to apply here our Lord's words 31.  
on another occasion) *will be converted, and*  
*enter into the kingdom of heaven before us;*  
sooner than persons of this temper and  
complexion.

But then, let us be solicitous to show  
our love to that God whom we have not seen, 1 Jo. iv.  
in this way as well as others, *by loving our* 20.  
*brother, whom we have seen, and our neigh-* v. 31.  
*bour as ourselves:* and thus ennoble our  
benevolence and brotherly kindness, ma-  
king it more beneficial to our fellow-crea-  
tures, and more advantageous to ourselves.  
—And thus by the practice of strict piety,  
and universal virtue, and making use of the



SERM.

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few and wise positive institutions of christianity, to promote and cherish this excellent temper within us; we shall, during our abode on earth, be daily approaching nearer and nearer to the kingdom of God above, and at last have a safe and glorious entrance into it administered to us, through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom be glory and dominion, for ever. *Amen.*





## SERMON IX.

St. STEPHEN'S vision.

ACTS vii. 55, 56.

*But he, being full of the Holy Ghost,  
looked up stedfastly into heaven, and  
saw the glory of God, and Jesus  
standing on the right hand of God.  
And he said: Behold, I see the hea-  
vens opened, and the Son of man  
standing on the right hand of God.*

**T**HE person of whom the sacred his-  
torian gives us this very remarkable  
account, and that as confirmed by his own  
words, was Stephen, the first martyr for the  
word of God, as declared in the testimony  
of Jesus Christ. Of what family he was, or  
from whence he came, or how and when

SERM. he embraced the christian faith, we are not particularly informed. By his noble and sublime speech, which is recorded in this chapter, he should seem to have been a Jew of some considerable note and esteem for his knowledge in the law and the prophets, and his careful observation of the special conduct and dealings of providence with that favourite people. The first mention

cap. vi.  
ver. 5.

Ibid.

we have of him is in the former chapter; where he is chosen, with six more, to take care of, and distribute the church stock, for the daily support of its necessitous members in due and equitable proportions. His character is distinguishingly great and excellent. *Stephen was full of faith and of the Holy Ghost.* He was full of faith, thoroughly penetrated with a belief of the truth and divinity of the christian religion; every way equal to the great trust to be reposed in him, on account of his strict integrity and fidelity; and remarkable for his firm courageous adherence to Christ and his cause. And he was also filled with the ex-

traordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost; which he received either immediately with the apostles themselves, or else soon after, upon the preaching of Peter.

No wonder that a person of so excellent temper, and so extraordinarily qualified, should soon appear distinguished in his Mas-

ter's



ter's cause. Accordingly we find him **SERM.**  
 exerting himself with an extraordinary **IX.**  
 zeal for the honour of Jesus, for the  
 vindication of his religion, and the silencing  
 all the cavils and objections of the most  
 malicious opposers of it. And Stephen, cap. vi.  
ver. 8, 9,  
10.  
*full of faith and power* (this extraordinary  
 power of the Holy Spirit) *did great wonders  
 and miracles among the people:* in so much  
 that there arose certain, from several syna-  
 gogues, who disputed with Stephen; but,  
 after all their efforts to invalidate his reason-  
 ings and arguments, they were not able to  
 resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he  
 spake. His enemies hereupon, instead of  
 being convinced, and yielding to the force  
 of truth, grew only more incensed against  
 him; suborned false witnesses, stirred up  
 their chief priests and rulers, and brought  
 him, as a criminal, before them. Ibid.  
ver. 11—  
13.

The chapter where my text is contains,  
 as I said, his speech before the high priest  
 and council: in which he runs a secret pa-  
 rallel between their perverseness in reject-  
 ing Christ, and that of their ancestors of  
 former generations, who had rejected Mo-  
 ses and the Prophets; and, at length, closes  
 it with charging the murder of Christ home  
 upon them; and in a very strong and pun-  
 gent manner upbraids them with being the

V. c. vii.  
51—53.

SERMON true descendants of that perverse people,  
 IX. who had all along (notwithstanding the peculiar privileges wherewith God had honoured them as his favourite people) resisted every striving of God by his spirit with them, for their reformation and happiness.

*When they heard these things, (saith the sacred historian) they were cut to the heart, not being able to deny the charge; and, being incensed to the greatest degree, they gnashed on him with their teeth, thus discovering the rancour and malice of their hearts against him, by their furious and revengeful looks.*

It was then that Stephen, instead of being terrified with their countenances, and in the least hurry and confusion, from the apprehension of what might be the farther effects of their hatred, turns his eyes from them, and directs them up to heaven, and from thence was favoured with that bright vision, which he relates to his accusers and judge while he beholds it; and which I have chosen for the subject of the ensuing discourse.

In enlarging on which I propose,

I. To explain more fully the account of this vision of Stephen.

II. To endeavour to clear and prove the credibility of it. And

III. To

III. To make some suitable observations **SERM.**

from it.

**IX.**

I. I would more largely explain this account of Stephen's vision as it stands related in my text. — *He being full of the Holy Ghost looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God; and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said: Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.*

Here it will be proper to consider distinctly the vision itself; and then, to what it is ascribed: and that is to his being full of the Holy Ghost, or under his miraculous influence.

The account of his vision is this: *He looked stedfastly into heaven, saw the heavens opened, and there saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.*

*He looked stedfastly up toward Heaven.* —

The eye of his mind was directed thither before: and as he now reasonably expected soon to become a sacrifice to the rage and malice of his enemies, he fixes his heart and thoughts more strongly and intensely on God and Christ, and that glorious world to which he believed Jesus was ascended, and on the happiness which he was preparing there for his faithful followers, to encourage himself to be faithful unto death, and to sup-

Dr. Clarke





port his mind under his most severe trials. And with his thoughts thus directed and intensely fixed there, he turned up his bodily eyes to the visible heaven; and being fixed in that posture, with a most fervent heart and eager desire, he *saw the heavens opened*, as he said; or his view was carried distinctly beyond all these lower regions, up to that particular part of space, which is in scripture called *the third heaven*.

And there he saw the glory of God, and the Son of man standing at God's right hand. By the glory of God we are to understand that glory in which God appears, when he sees fit to manifest himself in the fullest manner. As God is essentially present every where, so he cannot, strictly speaking, be in one place more than another: but he can make particular manifestations of his glory when, and where, and how he pleases.

Dr.  
Clarke.

“Therefore, it is observed, that where he does that in the most conspicuous manner, that place is, by way of eminence, called his habitation, his throne, his presence. And because the heavens are higher than the earth; because thence are derived all beneficial influences on our earth; because there is the habitation of angels attending on the commands of God: therefore God who is really and essentially present every where alike, yet with

“with regard to his power and the manifestation of his glory, is to us represented as being particularly in heaven.” And from thence had Stephen a view of the Shechinah or sensible glory, in which he was pleased to manifest himself: probably like that which formerly appeared in the tabernacle and temple, to the Patriarchs, to Moses and the Prophets; only in a more grand and magnificent manner. Such an appearance of glory as was the symbol of the immediate presence of the only living and true God; that by which Jehovah alone could distinguish himself, attended by the various orders of angels his ministering servants.

And then within this opened heaven he also saw Jesus, the Son of man, at the right hand of God. — This is commonly regarded as a figurative expression. The great God being set forth to us here after the manner of an earthly king: who, while he is surrounded with his nobles and courtiers of high rank and worth, and the chief ministers of his kingdom; yet has still one place more honourable and magnificent than any of the rest, assigned to him, whom the King principally delighteth to exalt and honour, as most worthy of his special favour and regard. “And that was observed to have been of old custom, and is still determined to be, the next place at the right hand

SERM.

IX.

Dr. Barrow.

SERMON. The hand of the sovereign. Thus our blest

IX. fed Lord, being raised from the dead, and

advanced to the highest honours, having all power in heaven and earth committed to him, is said to be exalted to the right Hand of the Father. And he is often repre-

sented to sit at God's right hand in heaven, *(When he had by himself purged our sins, sat*

*Heb. i. 3. down on the right hand of his majesty on high:)* to denote the fulness of his pos-

session, the perpetual duration of his domi-

nion and kingdom, and the perfect ease and felicity which he enjoys. — But I cannot

think this representation altogether figurative in the case of Stephen. For though, to

be sure, God has neither hands nor eyes, being a perfect spirit; no man hath ever

seen any proper face or shape of God the Father: yet as the Shechinah was the visible

display of his glory, and as we have suppo-

sed Stephen beheld something of that kind with his bodily eyes at this time, so I can-

not help thinking, but that he had a dis-

tinct view of his exalted Saviour in his glo-

rious body, nearest to that glorious symbol of the divine presence, and on its right side.

And the posture in which he beheld the exalted Saviour is very remarkable. He saw *Jesus standing on the right hand of God,*

*rising up, as it were, from that place on the right hand of the throne, on which he at first*

sat



sat down when he returned to his Father, and standing ready to assist and encourage this his faithful servant to hold out and to finish well. In this posture he appeared as his advocate, or rather his approving judge; and as his grand auxiliary, ready to receive his departing spirit when he should breathe it out into his hands, as the great captain of his salvation, first made perfect *Heb. ii. 9, 10.* *thru' sufferings himself, and now crowned with glory and honour* as the reward of them; and holding out a crown of life and glory to him, that he might not in this last conflict be *Heb. xii. 3.* *wearied or faint in his mind.* This then was the vision of Stephen; a clear and distinct view up into that heaven, which is favoured with the peculiar display of the divine glory: "that place (as it is well expressed) which, of all places in the universe, is in situation most eminent; in inequality most holy; in dignity most excellent; in glory most illustrious; the inmost sanctuary of God's temple above, not made with hands; the most august chamber of his presence in the celestial choir;" where he beheld the grandest display and manifestation of God that can be conceived; and Jesus in the full glory of his exalted human nature, standing next to the throne of God. Now this was certainly something out of the common way; something that the feeble powers

SERM. powers of flesh and blood could never  
 IX. have reached to or sustained of themselves;  
 something therefore truly miraculous.—And  
 therefore it is natural to inquire in the next  
 place :

To what this miracle is to be ascribed, or  
 how was Stephen prepared and enabled to  
 take this happy view, and to support under  
 it?—And my text informs us, that it was in  
 consequence of his being full of the Holy  
 Ghost. *He being full of the Holy Ghost,*  
*looked up stedfastly into heaven.* This, as  
 was observed, had been said of him before,  
 where by the extraordinary power of the  
 Holy Ghost, he wrought many wonders and  
 miracles. But at this time he seems to have  
 had yet fuller and larger influences com-  
 municated to him : a fresh and more abun-  
 Phil. i. 19. dant supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ,  
 which raised and animated him above him-  
 self. By this glorious power he was at once  
 Eph. iii. not only strengthened with all might in  
 16. that his inward man, but also in his outward  
 man too ; so that he was enabled in a su-  
 pernatural manner to look up thither, where  
 God displays himself in the fullest manner to  
 created view, and where Jesus reigns in all  
 the glory of the human nature ; and to fix his  
 eye intently on the amazing sight, without  
 the least injury to his feeble frame. A sight  
 this, which without such an extraordinary  
 concurring

concurring influence from on high would have been too strong for mortal eyes. SERM. IX

But it may be said: What proof have we for all this, besides the account here given of it by Luke; who produces no other voucher for it than Stephen's own declaration? And might not he himself be an enthusiast, and so the whole affair, a mere illusion?—This leads me to the next head.

II. To clear and prove the credibility of this miraculous vision.

Now, (not to enlarge at present on the proof we have for the general truth of the history, but taking that for granted) let it be observed,

That it was not impossible for God to vouchsafe such a vision to his servant, or to render him capable of receiving it. However strange and extraordinary things may appear to us, who know so very little; or however unable we may be to account for, or fully conceive the performance of, what is beyond our own weak efforts: yet nothing is to be reckoned extraordinary and surprising with him, whose wisdom and understanding are infinite; nor difficult with him who is almighty in power; nor is any thing impossible with him, but what implies a contradiction in the performance. He that has all the powers of nature under his command,



SERM. mand, and who is himself the great All in all.

IX. can certainly manifest himself to his creatures

according to their respective natures, and so as to convince them of his presence; and he can raise and strengthen the faculties of the human mind, as well as the bodily organs, to bear that which, in the common course of nature, they would be unequal to and unable to sustain. And therefore that God might, in the present case, miraculously support his servant is certainly to be allowed. So that if Stephen was at any time under the extraordinary influence of the Holy Ghost, the rest is easy to be accounted for.

And that he really was so, will appear no way improbable; if we observe, (what has been hinted at before,) viz.

That this is not the first account we have of his being thus honoured and distinguished. We have seen that he was chosen at first into the office of a Deacon, because that he was then known to be full of the Holy

cap. vi. 5. Ghost as well as of faith. — And he proved himself afterwards thus miraculously endowed, in the same manner, that the apostles and others did, who laid claim to those gifts by the great wonders and miracles which he did among the people. So that the same arguments, which prove they were under an extraordinary supernatural influence, will

ver. 8.

will prove that Stephen was also: and for the same reasons that their extraordinary powers were to be ascribed to the Holy Ghost, or the wonderful operations of the spirit of God, his also were the same. — Besides,

There is one circumstance in the history of Stephen, which may the more incline us to believe, that his own account of his being favoured with this vision was true. — We read in the last verse of the 6th chapter, that, after his enemies had laid their false accusations against him, *all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him beheld his face as it had been the face of an angel, i. e. not only full of gravity and sweetness, but also "shining with something of a visible splendor, not unlike the face of Moses, when he came down from the mount."* This was visible to all his accusers and judges, who beheld the brightness of his countenance; and it was enough to convince them (if they had not been too malicious and perverse to receive it) that this person was innocent of the crime laid to his charge, (of being a blasphemer against the law of Moses) when he was honoured in the same manner that Moses was. — With this majestic look he begins his defence against these false accusations: and, if we suppose the brightness continued on his face all the while, (and I cannot see any reason to

c. vi. 15.

V. Exod. xxxiv. 29.

SEAM. conclude the contrary) this must render  
 IX. his own account of the vision afterwards  
 more probable, as he appeared all along to  
 have been so extraordinary a person, and  
 one so favoured of God already.

Again ; This farther circumstance might  
 have obviated the charge of enthusiasm  
 in the present case, and prepared his hear-  
 ers the better to receive his account of his  
 vision : The pretensions Stephen had made to  
 perform signs and wonders by an extraordi-  
 nary power were no enthusiastic pretensions,  
 for he actually performed them ; and many  
 were witnesses to the facts, and some felt  
 the beneficial effects of them. His enemies  
 were witnesses to his angelic countenance ;  
 that could be no artifice, nor did ever the  
 strongest workings and agitations of the pas-  
 sions of an enthusiast impress such a splen-  
 dor on the face, as ever I heard. Why then  
 should it be thought a thing incredible, that  
 such a person should be farther favoured even  
 with such a vision as he declared he saw ?  
 or that this should be esteemed the effect  
 of enthusiasm, any more than any thing that  
 went before ?

Besides ; His account of what he saw is  
 quite distinct and regular : no confusion in  
 the relation ; nothing inconsistent with the  
 rules of right reason ; and the terms in which  
 he expressed himself were, most of them,  
 such as the Jews were well acquainted with.

The



The opening of the heavens, and having SERM.  
visions from thence was no strange and un- IX.  
intelligible language to them. They be-  
lieved the accounts of these things with re-  
spect to Moses and the prophets. Isaiah,  
and Ezekiel had given particular accounts  
of their visions of the glory of God; why  
should it not be equally credible Stephen  
might have a like view?

"No; for his declaring he *saw Jesus*  
*at the right hand of the glory of God;*  
"would invalidate the whole story with the  
"Jews." But, whether they would admit  
it or not, this circumstance seems rather to  
confirm the truth of the fact; and such a  
representation as that was most suited to the  
case of Stephen, and to confute his adver-  
saries in the shortest manner, as well as to fill  
them with effectual terror, if they remained  
perverse and impenitent after all. — He had  
been accused as an enemy and blasphemer  
against God. At the close of his speech in  
his own defence, he tells them that he had  
been favoured with a sight of the true God  
and his glory, as strong and full as any of  
his prophets of old ever had; which they  
might well think God would never vouch-  
safe to a blasphemer. — He was persecuted  
by them for asserting the cause of Jesus;  
that he was before prophesied of as their  
Messiah; and that when they killed him,  
they

SERM. they murdered that just one who was their  
 IX. promised Saviour. He told them that he be-  
 ver. 52. lieved him risen from the dead ; and he now  
 declared that he saw him exalted *at the right  
 hand* of the glory of God, in the form of  
 the son of man ; that *son of man*, whom  
 Daniel the prophet Daniel says *he saw in the visions  
 vii. 13. 14.* of the night, who came to the *antient of his  
 days*, and received the possession of an uni-  
 versal kingdom ; and which son of man the  
 Jews believed was to be their Messiah. And  
 he thus put them in mind of the declara-  
 tion, which Jesus himself had made, while on  
 earth, despised and rejected of them, and even  
 while standing as a criminal at the tribunal  
 of the high priest : *I say unto you ; hereafter  
 Matt. shall ye see the son of man sitting on the right  
 xxxvi. 64.* hand of power, and coming in the clouds of hea-  
 ven. “ These words he himself (saith Ste-  
 phen) hath now begun to fulfil : I see him  
 exalted at the right hand of God ; and as  
 sure as he is there, so surely may you ex-  
 pect him to come to judgment.” —

Upon the whole then, the nature of the  
 vision, the time and circumstances of it, as  
 well as the extraordinary character of the  
 person who says he was favoured with it,  
 and the manner in which he relates it, as  
 well as the persons to whom he relates the  
 account of it, render it highly credible ; and  
 that

that it was not the effect of a weak and SERM.  
frantic brain. IX.

I only add: That it was worthy of God to favour this his servant with such a sight as this; and therefore we may reasonably conclude that he did so.

It was for the honour of God's own holy name. By this means, God shew'd his distinguishing regard to truth; and to virtue and integrity suffering for the sake of it. A cause always worthy of God to manifest himself in favour of; and most eminently to distinguish those who most courageously signalize themselves in this just and righteous cause. This did Stephen; and therefore he thought fit to discover his glory to him in this extraordinary manner.

This vision also tended to the honour of the Son of God, and therefore was farther worthy of God to grant. Here was a fresh testimony to the truth of his resurrection and exaltation to the kingdom of heaven; and this faithful servant was beforehand made a witness of his glory and the high dignity to which he was advanced: by which means his esteem and veneration of his Lord was greatedened and increased, if possible, still the more. Every fresh attestation, which the Father gave to the truth of the mission of Jesus, redounded to his honour and glory; and surely this must do it, this which was of



SERM. so peculiar and extraordinary a nature. Whether the enemies of the cross of Christ would believe it or not, yet surely its disciples would, and thereby be more devoted to their Lord. Nay, tho' the generality of his accusers might remain obstinate, yet some unbelievers of less prejudice and more honesty, might be won over to the same cause; when they heard an account of such a fact, so circumstanced as that they could not but, upon serious reflection, apprehend it likely to be true.

More especially, it appears well worthy of him to vouchsafe this favour to Stephen, considering his particular circumstances. He was now in the near prospect of death, a death to be brought on him by the enemies of Jesus; and to be the first martyr in his cause. He had believed in him as the true Messiah; he became his disciple; in firm persuasion that God had raised him from the dead, and exalted him to glory under that character; and he had the most satisfactory evidence, that he was actually ascended, from those extraordinary powers which he had received in consequence of his ascension. But now he was to die for this faith, and to be the first who should lead the way through a violent death in this cause.—He was next to follow his master; and there was no cloud of Christian witnesses  
gone

gone before him, whose conduct and ex-  
 ample might animate him. His faith was  
 fixed on *Jesus the author and finisher of it*;  
*who for the joy that was set before him, endured*  
*the cross, despising the shame, and was now*  
*set down on the right hand of the throne of God.*

SERM.

IX.

Heb. xii.  
2.

And he knew his Lord had miraculous ap-  
 pearances for himself. In his last agonising  
 conflicts an angel from heaven was sent to  
 strengthen him in the garden. Surely then  
 the disciple might hope for, as he needed, some  
 extraordinary support and encouragement in  
 his prospect of death too; and a peculiar sup-  
 port, as the first who was to submit to a vio-  
 lent death for the sake of such a master; as well  
 as to confirm and strengthen the faith of those  
 who might be called to follow him through  
 the same bloody path. Was it not then  
 worthy of God to vouchsafe some extraor-  
 dinary assistance and encouragement to this  
 first and most zealous advocate of his dear  
 Son? And, if it was, what so suitable, as  
 honouring him with such a vision as this,  
 to give him a distinct view of the heavenly  
 glory, and of his Lord and Master in his glori-  
 ous and exalted state? This was an additional  
 and most pleasing confirmation of his faith;  
 and a fresh assurance to him, that he in  
 whom he had believed was abundantly able to  
 carry him through all. And the posture in  
 which he beheld him, *standing at the right*

Vide Luke  
xxii. 43.

SERM. *band of God*, as ready for his assistance, was  
 IX. the kindest and noblest intimation of his special regard to him; and a sure pledge, that he would certainly receive him to himself as soon as his enemies had done their worst, and make him partaker with himself of that glory which he beheld before hand.

And then, this was peculiarly suited to hearten the other disciples too. When they saw the first martyr dying with that invincible courage; and heard him declare, that he had seen Jesus standing in heaven in the character of his leader, advocate and friend, and the victorious captain of his people's salvation: How must it hearten them in the same cause; make them more valiant in their work, in opposition to all the worst attempts of their enemies; and *not reckon their lives dear to them, so as that they might finish their course with joy.*

Act. xx.  
 24.

But I shall now,

III. Close this subject with two or three suitable observations. And

1. We may take notice here of an additional evidence in confirmation of that important truth, the ascension and glorification of our blessed Lord.

To us christians it is a faithful saying, that Jesus our Master is not only risen, but ascended and glorified too. When  
 he



he was about to leave the world, he told SERM.  
 his disciples, that *he should ascend to his* IX.  
*Father and their Father, to his God and*  
*their God.* Accordingly they *saw him go* Jo. xx. 17.  
*up,* and when they lost sight of him, two Act. i. 10,  
11.

angels came down from heaven to assure them that he was returned thither.—Afterwards they received the Holy Ghost in his extraordinary gifts, as an assurance that he was returned to his Father, and had all power both in heaven and earth committed to him, according to his promise before he left the world.—But none of them as yet had ever seen him on the throne of his glory. Well; as a farther confirmation of their faith, as well as his own, the first martyr is favoured with that bright vision: and he declares to all about him what he saw; and that in such circumstances, and in so rational and distinct a manner, as was sufficient to satisfy every honest hearer, and all that hereafter should receive the gospel testimony concerning Christ and his followers.—Let us bless God for this testimony, and receive it with joy and thankfulness; and let our faith in the gospel increase in its strength and influence, in proportion to the increasing evidence for it.

2. We see the wisdom and goodness of God in proportioning the supports and encouragements of his faithful servants to their extraordinary trials.

*St. STEPHEN'S vision.*

SERM.

IX.

Deut.

xxxiii.

25.

Herein was fulfilled that antient promise  
*as thy days, so shall thy strength be.* That

particular bloody path which Stephen was to tread, had never been marked by any footsteps but those of his Lord. And though he had finished it gloriously, yet he was now out of sight, and returned to his own mansions; and this disciple was to follow first and alone. But, that he might not think his Master had forgotten him, now his own conflicts were over, and he was seated on his throne, and would leave him to struggle through all in his own feeble strength, he is favoured with a sight of him in his glory, as having received the reward of his own sufferings, and being in a posture ready to help and succour him, and to reward him too. How kind and compassionate this! How wisely adapted to the state and circumstances of that suffering saint!

And what an encouragement is this to all christians to hope and trust in God for all needful supplies of favour and assistance according to their various trials? They may from hence be assured, that, if they are called out to extraordinary trials, they shall have extraordinary supports. And if they are to suffer not only persecutions but death for the sake of God, and his Son Jesus; they shall be assisted with all needful supplies, and encouraged with peculiar consolations;

consolations; if not the same in kind with SERM. that of the first martyr, which was most IX. expedient for him, yet with such as shall be most suited to the particular state and circumstance of each sufferer; and most consistent with the honour of God, and of his dear Son.

3. How grateful a representation does this subject give us of the heavenly world?

It is that place where God shews himself in the fullest and noblest manner to created view, in all his unveiled glory, as at once the original author, and everlasting object of their happiness. It is that place where Jesus, the christians Lord, whom his soul loves, to whom he is solemnly devoted, and whom he follows hard after, dwells: but how? why no longer in the form of a servant, no longer in that destitute manner in which the son of man once did on earth, *when he had no where to lay his head*: but as Mat. viii. 20. the son of man, exalted to the right hand of the throne of the majesty on high; and there, as employed in his behalf, as his advocate, and intercessor, and almighty friend now; and as *preparing mansions of glory for* Jo. xiv. 3. *him, that where he is, his faithful servant may be also!*

How should we, as christians, realize this state to our minds! How should our faith in it increase and strengthen in the exercise!

4. How well may the true believer be reconciled



SERM. reconciled to death with such a prospect before him !

Though he is not to expect such a vision as Stephen had, yet by a firm and rational faith he is as morally sure of such a state of happiness : and if the evidences of his sincerity on gospel grounds are clear and strong, he is sure, that he shall enter into that happy state when he leaves this world, and be for ever with the Lord there. And when, in the near views of death, he finds his inward man is renewed day by day, and through every breach made in the earthly tabernacle the eye of his soul is more intensely fixed on heaven, and he descries something of the glory shortly to be revealed ; with what firmness and pleasure may he breath his last in the language of Stephen, amidst the shower of stones : *Lord Jesus receive my spirit ! and when he has said this fall asleep !* — What good man, in such a frame, but would wish to die, and desire to be with Christ there, which is infinitely better !

v. 59, 60.

May you and I live by, and imitate the faith and holiness of the sincere and eminent disciples of Jesus now, as being assured this is the only way to die their death, and to have our latter end, and our eternal state, like theirs ! *Amen.*

SERMON



## SERMON X.

St. STEPHEN's dying prayer.

---

ACTS vii. 59.

*And they stoned Stephen, calling upon  
God, and saying : Lord Jesus re-  
ceive my spirit !*

AS in a former discourse I considered SERM.  
X.  
the account which the sacred historian  
hath given us of the extraordinary vision with  
which St. Stephen declared he was favour-  
ed, and endeavoured to show the credibility  
of it, and clear the whole from the charge  
of enthusiasm ; I thought it might not be  
unsuitable to follow him to his violent death,  
and take particular notice of his behaviour  
in his last moments, and see with what a  
temper of mind he left this world of ours.  
And the remainder of the history of this  
good

SERM. good man, (from the close of his speech to  
 X. the end of the chapter) will furnish sufficient matter for our useful and pleasing meditations.

We find that, upon his relating his extraordinary vision, those who had before discovered their malice by their looks, could now contain themselves no longer. For up-  
 ver. 57—on hearing his words, *they cried out, with  
 60. a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him; and the witnesses laid down their cloaths at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God and saying: Lord Jesus receive my spirit! And he kneeled down and cried with a loud voice: Lord, lay not this sin to their charge! And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*

In farther enlarging on this passage of scripture, I propose,

I. To give you some short account of that particular kind of violent death which this excellent saint suffered.

II. To consider the noble workings of his mind under it—And

III. To conclude with some proper reflections.

I. I would give you some short account of



of that particular kind of death which this SERM.  
 excellent martyr suffered. — *They stoned* X.  
*Stephen*

Stoning to death was one of the chief  
 punishments among the Jews, to be inflict-  
 ed, according to God's appointment, on the  
 most notorious offenders; and, among  
 others, especially *on those who blasphemed the*  
*name of Jehovah, and cursed; and also on*  
*those who inticed others to idolatry.*

Levit.  
 xxiv.

11—14,

&c.

Deut. xiii.

10, &c.

The manner of performing this punish-  
 ment, from the accounts of the Jewish writ-  
 ters is said to have been this: "From the ex-  
 " press command in Leviticus, the man to  
 " be stoned was led without the camp; (and  
 " from thence came the custom, afterwards,  
 " of executing criminals without the cities;)  
 " when he was carried to execution, an  
 " officer marched before him, and cried:  
 " Such a one is going to be stoned for such  
 " a crime, and at the accusation of such  
 " and such witnesses: if any one can show  
 " that he is innocent, let him come."

See

Lamy,

Light-

foot, &c.

" When the criminal was at the distance  
 " of ten cubits from the place of execution,  
 " he was exhorted to confess his crime;  
 " and when he came nearer, (within about  
 " four cubits of the place) he was stript of  
 " his cloaths. The place on which the  
 " person was stoned, was raised about ten  
 " or twelve feet, on which the criminal was  
 " brought

SERM. "brought with his hands tied : from

X. "whence one of the witnesses threw him

~ "down on his back against a stone laid on

"purpose; and if he turned his face, he was

"again put into that posture. If he did

"not die with this, another witness took a

"great stone and threw it upon his heart:

"and if he did not expire then, all the

"people stoned him. — Sometimes they

"threw the prisoner down headlong in

"such a manner as to dash him against

"some great stone; and if this did not

"dispatch him, they threw another upon

"him which crushed him to pieces: to

"which custom our blessed Lord is sup-

"posed to allude in St. Matthew's gospel,

cap. xxi. "when he says: *Whosoever shall fall on this*

44. "stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it

"shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

Thus did Stephen suffer as a blasphemer,

and false prophet; though in reality he was

innocent of the crime laid to his charge.

Nor indeed was he legally condemned

by the proper judicature, but the clamour and

uproar of the rabble prevailed; they had sub-

orned false witnesses, they fix'd the charge,

and hurry him away, while the judges wink

at their conduct: and thus under the pretend-

ed form of justice, though with real and no-

torious injustice, did this excellent Saint fall

a sacrifice to the rage and cruelty of the wick-

ed and perverse.

But

But how then did he behave under his sufferings? Did he appear fearful and timorous? Did he draw back, as unwilling to resist unto blood, striving against sin? No; he endured to the end, he waxed valiant in his master's cause; and having received such encouragement and distinguishing favours from his God and exalted Saviour, he becomes superior to death in all its most frightful and shocking appearances. And how were his thoughts now employed? Were they wholly taken up about his sufferings, or in accusing and condemning his enemies, and imprecating destruction upon them?

Heb. xii.

4.

This leads me on to the next general head of discourse.

II. To consider the noble workings of Stephen's mind under these his sufferings.—And we shall see that they discovered themselves in a most solemn act of worship and devotion to his exalted Lord and Saviour. \*

Behold him then, now ready to be offer'd up, standing on the appointed spot a spectacle to God, to angels, and men, and the time of his departure fully come. And suppose

\* The following part of the account represents him expressing also the most generous benevolence and compassion towards his enemies and murderers. ---- He prayed with a loud voice: Lord lay not this sin to their charge! ---- But that comes not within our present design to enlarge on. ver. lx.



SERM. suppose that, as they were throwing him  
 X. down from the eminence, you heard him  
 thus address himself: *Lord Jesus receive my Spirit!* — how natural are the inquiries: to whom was this prayer addressed? and what was the matter of it, or what did the dying Martyr ask of the object of this his devotion? Let us attend to each of these a little distinctly.

1. To whom does Stephen address this dying prayer? It is said in the text: *He called upon God, saying: Lord Jesus receive my spirit.* But the word *God*, (as you may observe by its being printed in a different character) is not in the original. There it runs thus: *They stoned Stephen calling upon, or invoking, and saying, Lord Jesus: so that if any word had been supplied by our translation, it should have been more properly that of Jesus; and this should have been the reading: Calling upon or invoking Jesus, and saying: Lord Jesus receive my spirit.* — So that it was a direct and immediate prayer to Jesus Christ; a most solemn and sublime act of devotion paid to him, as now exalted at the right hand of the Father, and exalted above every name that is named; and worthy to receive blessing and honour and glory and salvation, not only from men, but from angels too.

And there was something extremely grand and beautiful, in this first martyr for Christ,

and

8  
 5/3  
 597

man  
 24

and his cause, making this most express SERM.  
and particular prayer and solemn address to X.  
him by name. He had been favoured with   
a vision of him in glory: such a vision as  
represented him not only advanced to be the  
*head of all principality and power*; but in a Col. ii. 10.  
posture ready to employ all his divine power  
in his behalf; to support him through all  
that he could possibly suffer from the worst  
of his enemies malice, to make him superior  
to it, and to take special care of him even  
in the article of death itself. How proper  
and becoming then this act of devotion to  
him, who thus manifested himself to his suf-  
fering servant? It was but a fit return of  
gratitude for a favour already bestowed; and  
a proper and suitable acknowledgement of  
his special obligations to him, and his firm  
belief of his being really the divine person  
he took him for; that he heard his prayers,  
and could fully answer them, and fulfill all  
that the sight of him in glory had encour-  
aged him to expect from one so infinitely  
able to save all that come unto God by him.

As he was now, by his sufferings bear-  
ing witness to Christ, it was most season-  
able to direct his prayer to him; but "es-  
pecially (as the excellent Mr. *Baxter* very Baxter's  
judiciously observes) " because it was an act last work  
" of mediation, that he petitioned for, and of a Be-  
" therefore he directs his petition to the Me- liever,  
diator. vol. 4. p.  
864. Fol.

SERM.

X.



“tor. Those things that belong to the office of the Mediator, as interceding for us in heaven, must be requested of the Mediator : and those things which belong to the Father to give for the sake of the Mediator must be asked for his sake.”

And then, this prayer to Jesus in his dying extremities must convince all who heard it, that certainly Stephen was sincere and believed stedfastly his own report of the vision ; when he could support himself even in that most important season with a persuasion that his Master could and would now hear him, and regard his supplications. And as he had acted a consistent part all along, and given a most wise and rational account of all hitherto ; he must appear, at this season, if possible, less an enthusiast, as well as less an impostor, than ever.

It is a solemn and awful thing to die : more solemn and awful to those, who have the truest sense of things, and the most just notions of another and eternal world, than to others : most of all so to those who have freely given up their hopes in this life, and are encountering a violent death, in behalf of the cause and interest of another ; whom they have owned as their Master, and whom they have followed in the loss of all things here, on his promise to provide for them beyond the grave, and for their everlasting happiness

as



as reasonable intelligent beings. No man in SERM.  
his wits (as Stephen most soberly was) would X.  
have died, praying to such a Master as in   
the other world, and as the Lord of it, if  
he had not the most satisfactory reason to  
believe that he was really in such a state;  
and abundantly able and willing to do for,  
and be all that to, him, which he needed  
and desired above all in that most serious  
and important hour. Such a prayer to Jesus  
was laying the stress of his hopes upon him  
under this character; and tacitly implied  
a desire, that it might fare with him in death,  
and to eternity, according as his persuasion  
and testimony was true or not.

Especially if we consider

II. What the matter of Stephen's prayer  
was; or what it was that he committed to  
the Lord Jesus in this his last act of devo-  
tion: and that was his spirit. *Lord Jesus,*  
*(saith he) receive my spirit.*

What was this spirit? It was evidently  
something, that he apprehended death would  
separate from his body.—Was it then the  
mere animal life? That ceases with the stroke  
of death. No. It is worth our observing, that  
the original word here is different from that πνευμα;  
which is used for what the old philosophers  
called, the animal soul: and signifies the ψυχη.  
rational and intelligent part of man; that by  
which he is most nearly related to God as

SERM. the Great Father of spirits. It is that *spirit*

X. *in man*, which in a peculiar manner is *the inspiration of the Almighty*, and by which *he hath understanding given to him*; the thinking conscious principle within; that nobler part in man, which, though in the closest and most mysterious union with the body, is yet of a nature quite distinct from it, an immaterial immortal substance: and in the dissolving of this union consists the death of the man. This spirit, or soul of his Stephen concluded would not die with the body, but immediately, on the stroke of death, leave the earthly house of its tabernacle fallen into ruin, and subsist in a separate state; where it should be conscious of its existence, and exert its powers and faculties in a most lively manner. And as he could not but be apprized, that his spirit was never to return into this life again, but to be fixed unchangeably in that whereinto it would pass at death; so he was most solicitous, that this spirit of his should be safe and happy there, and its immortal interests fully secured. And therefore he thus addresses himself to his Saviour: *Lord Jesus receive my spirit!*

Job xxxii.  
8.

But let us here more particularly consider, what this prayer to the Lord Jesus implies: *Lord Jesus!* he said, *receive my spirit!*

It

It intimates these following things, as the SERM. matter of his desire. X.

1. That at the period of separation he would be pleased to take this his soul or spirit under his own immediate charge and protection. That when his body was dropped, and his spirit left uncloathed, and entering on another, and a different state and manner of existence, and one in many respects unknown to him, he might not be left exposed without a guide and a friend there. That when he should enter into the world of spirits, he might escape all the efforts of the apostate spirits, and of the prince of the power of the air, and be kept safe from harm. For this purpose he prays to Jesus, who is the Lord of the invisible world, and has conquered death and him that had the power of it, that he would take his departing spirit into his custody, and guard it unhurt to its own proper appointed place.

q. d. " Lord Jesus ! I have follow'd thee, " as my master, through trials and suffer- " ings ; and being supported by thine al- " mighty power am now got to the last step, " and am just ready to follow thee through a " bloody death from world to world. I de- " sire to die like thee ; and in humble imi- " tation of thine example, would commit my " soul to thee, who hast discovered thyself " to me as having triumphed over death,

Vide Luke  
xxiii. 46.



SERM. "and as Lord of that world into which I

X. "am just entering. Thou hast shown thy-

~ "self waiting for its departure, and ready  
 "to take the charge of it. Lord Jesus, afford  
 "now thy help and receive it into thy  
 "custody; and keep it safe from all at-  
 "tempts of the great enemy of souls; and  
 "be it guarded by thine almighty power  
 "from every harm!"

2. This prayer farther implies, that Christ would accept this his departing spirit, and own it in a way of approbation and favour.

q. d. "Lord Jesus receive my spirit! It  
 "has been devoted to thee, and employed  
 "for thee: it is now performing the last  
 "act of obedience to thee; and most freely  
 "consents to the destruction of the bodily  
 "life, as a proof of its fidelity to thee, and  
 "its firm adherence to thy cause and inte-  
 "rest. Thou Lord and Saviour, who art  
 "to be my judge, let this spirit meet with  
 "thine approbation, when it leaves the  
 "body; and be owned and accepted of thee  
 "when it shall enter into thy kingdom."

Augar.

So the original word is sometimes used to signify a taking or receiving any thing as an acceptable offering, or that which one was well pleased with,

3. Hereupon, in consequence of this, this prayer of Stephen must certainly imply his desire

desire and hope, that his spirit might be happy with Christ in its separate state. SERM. X.

Surely he that had just before looked up into heaven itself, and beheld distinctly *the glory of God, and Jesus standing at his right hand*, when he prayed to his exalted Lord to receive his spirit, on its departure out of the body, must mean something more than the merely having it kept in safe custody, in a kind of lethargic state, unactive, and without any enjoyment. This would have been but a poor encouragement to him, who had, as it were, taken possession of the joys of heaven before hand. Surely he could mean nothing less than this: that Jesus would receive this spirit to himself, and make it happy with him in that state which he had given him such a view of before; even there, where God gives the full displays of his glory, and Jesus himself reigns at his right hand in all the exalted glory of his human nature—This then must certainly be the full import of the dying request of this excellent martyr: q. d. “Lord Jesus! Thou who art exalted at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and whom these eyes have beheld in the full possession of thy kingdom and glory! Encouraged by this view, I am venturing through death for thy sake, in hopes that thou wilt own and accept me, and reward me with that happiness.”

## St. STEPHEN'S dying prayer.

SERM. "happiness which thou hast already shewed

X. "me. When my enemies have killed this

body, they have no more that they can

"do; my spirit will depart, and will tend

"with all its full desire towards thee. O

"receive it to thy self, take it into thy blis-

"ful presence, that so (according to thy

"promise) where thou art I may be also!"

Once more,

4. This prayer of Stephen may be considered, as having a reference to the re-union of his spirit with his body after its resurrection.

Though he does not make any mention of his body, but seems quite unconcerned at that being broken to pieces with stones; yet we are by no means to conclude from thence that he gave up his body for lost, and never expected to hear any thing more of it for ever. No: as he was a disciple of Jesus, he was eminently a believer of the resurrection of the body; and he was assured of the truth of it, because he had already seen Jesus himself, *the first fruits of them that sleep*, in his own raised glorified body in heaven. And as he was now giving up his bodily life for his sake, he was, no doubt, encouraged to do this, from his hope that his body should, at the appointed time, be recovered from the dishonour of death and the grave, and made glorious and immortal.

1 Cor. xv.  
20.



mortal like the body of his Lord. And SERM.  
therefore he could easily bear the thoughts X.  
of its dishonour for a little while: since in  
the mean time his spirit would be happy  
with Christ; and he would watch over his  
dust in the grave, and in due time raise it,  
and re-unite it to his glorified spirit, so as to  
make him compleatly blessed in his entire  
person.

With such hopes and expectations did  
this first martyr pour out this his last prayer:  
*Lord Jesus receive my spirit!* And with this  
firm and lively faith in Christ, and full per-  
suasion that he would thus receive him,  
did he resign and dye.

I shall now,

III. Conclude with some proper obser-  
vations and reflections from this subject.

I. We may observe, that we have scrip-  
ture-warrant for addressing our prayers ex-  
pressly to our Lord Jesus. This prayer in  
my text is a very remarkable proof of it.

Nor is this the only place in scripture, where  
we meet with an instance of this nature.  
There are several religious acts of praise and  
thanksgiving, blessing in his name, and faith,  
and trust reposed upon him, recorded in  
the new testament: and these solemn  
acts of religious worship plainly intimate, that  
he is worthy, and hath a proper right to  
receive

SERM. receive them ; and that he is able to hear

X. prayers and to answer them, and to communicate the blessings that are asked of him. This is an honour that belongs to him as the only mediator between God and man, known by the name of the great Immanuel. And this, he himself hath told us, was the design of his being invested with that grand character of the universal judge, *that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.*

John v.  
23.

Philip. ii.  
9, 10, 11.

And he that in this religious manner *honoureth the son, honoureth the Father also.* For *God hath highly exalted him, even Christ Jesus, and given him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

2. We may infer from this subject, that the soul, or rational spirit, after death, is not in a state of insensibility, or deadness ; but continues a living active being, though in a state of separation from the body.

This is a truth which may be argued and strongly proved from the principles of philosophy. It is grounded upon its immateriality, or its being of a nature essentially different from matter \*.

But

\* The body is only a system of matter, and under that idea may, of itself, be very properly called a dead substance.

But not to enter here into the close abstract SERM.  
 reasonings even of true philosophy, (which X.  
 are by no means suited to the common ser-  
 vices of the pulpit;) I shall only observe, that  
 those whom philosophy had almost persua-  
 ded, yet appear, some of them, to be brought  
 over to the sleep of the soul, only from the  
 scriptures, even of the new testament. This,  
 I confess, appears to me as surprising a con-  
 version of judgment as any I have met  
 with!

Surely my text is not much in their fa-  
 vour. What did Stephen mean by desiring  
 the Lord Jesus to *receive his spirit*, on that  
 principle? "Why, it was an Hebrew ex-  
 "pression; and contained only this in ge-  
 "neral, that he desired Christ, as Lord,  
 "to take care of him when he died, and  
 "keep him in safe custody till the morning  
 "of the resurrection."—But does not the

disciple  
 stance. The soul makes the body active, and hath the  
 power of action inhering in itself. "Now that a sub-  
 stance having the power of action while joined with a dead See Bax-  
 "substance, (as the soul has while joined with the body) ter on the  
 "should only have this power while joined to that dead soul.  
 "substance, and be deprived of it when separate from that,  
 "includes, as is well observed, this plain contradiction;  
 "That a substance having, separately, no power to act,  
 "by being joyned to another substance having also no  
 "power to act, (which is true of the body universally) ac-  
 "quires a power of action, and exercises that power:  
 "which is the same thing as to say, that this power is an  
 "effect, and yet of nothing. For it is evident, that the  
 "uniting together of two powerless substances can never  
 "be the cause of power."



SERM. disciple herein imitate his Lord? And what  
 X. became of the spirit of Jesus, which he re-  
 commended to his Father in dying? Did  
 V. Luke that sleep with his body, or remain in a  
 xxiii. 46. half lethargy, as it were, till his resurrec-

tion? No; this is not allowed, even by the  
 favourers of this sentiment. They will not  
 say, that the soul of Christ slept. And is  
 there not a like reason to grant, that neither  
 did the spirit of this his martyr fall into sleep  
 at his death? Surely the same arguments  
 that prove the one will hold also as to the  
 other.

But it may be said: "This was an ex-  
 traordinary favour allowed to Stephen as  
 the first martyr."—Well then, even by  
 this objection we are got thus far; viz. that  
 there is one instance in the new testament of  
 the immediate happiness of the separate  
 spirit after death. And if this is allowed  
 to one martyr, why not to all others? Surely  
 St. Paul had the same separate state of hap-  
 piness in view, when he said, *He had a de-*  
*sire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is*  
*far better.* Would it be better for him,  
 could he himself judge it better, to leave this  
 world, where *to him to live was Christ,*  
 only to be in a sleepy unactive state, where-  
 in he could not serve him at all, but must  
 be at least, as it were, quiescent, or in a  
 state of indolence, till the resurrection?

Philip. i.

33.

ver. 21.

Would

Would not a person so fervent in spirit, SERM.  
 serving the Lord, in such a prospect have X.  
 chose, and been willing rather to have con-  
 tinued in the body as long as possible; and  
 wished the hour of his dissolution at the  
 farthest distance, that so he might still  
 spend and be spent in that delightful service?  
 He adds; *To die to him would be gain*, and Ibid.  
 therefore (were he only to consult his own  
 interest) he would chuse rather to die. But  
 what immediate gain would it be to him to  
 die, if he was to enjoy no intermediate state  
 of happiness till the final resurrection?—  
 Will it be enough to say: “that his state  
 “ of trial would be then concluded, and his  
 “ eternal felicity secured; whereas while  
 “ he continued here, he was in continual  
 “ danger, and himself dreaded, *lest* after  
 “ all he *should become a cast away?*” No 1 Cor. ix.  
 surely. For the continual apprehension of <sup>17.</sup>  
 that danger, as it made him more watchful,  
 (as he himself declares it did) would also ex-  
 cite him to pursue those methods, which would  
 render that danger still less, in proportion  
 as he became more abundant in his Master's  
 cause: and his growing zeal in it, and the  
 satisfaction and pleasure which he would  
 find continually increasing from the success  
 of his ministry, would be unspeakably more  
 agreeable to him, than the thoughts of be-  
 ing,

SERM. ing, for several hundred years, only an insensible fluggard in the grave.

X.

But allowing this to be the privilege of all martyrs: is it to be confined to them as a distinguishing reward?--But where does the scripture thus confine it? Does not this same St. Paul speak the language of all true christians, when he declares their desire, that  
 2Cor.v.8. *they were willing rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord.* In the original it is, to depart from the people who dwell in the body, and to be among the people that are with the Lord: and who are they? where are they? not surely a sluggish inactive society. By no means: to be present with the Lord, must imply not only a state of safety, but also of positive happiness.

Upon the whole then, the scripture seems so strongly to confirm this truth, that if philosophy seemed to make against it, I should, as a christian, for my part, reckon myself obliged to receive it. How much more then should it be regarded by the men of reason, when it is a truth, in which the best philosophy and the noblest revelation most perfectly agree; the latter, in the strongest manner, establishing the testimony of the former.

I only further add, that though the scriptures of the new testament in many places



places refer the future rewards to the judgment-day, and the general resurrection; we are not led from thence necessarily to conclude, that they deny a separate state of happiness for the soul; since there are, as we have seen, other passages of scripture which evidently make for it, and which cannot be so well explained in any other sense; especially that remarkable promise of our blessed Lord himself to the penitent thief on the cross: *I say unto thee, \* this day shalt thou be with me in paradise.*

SERM. X.  
Luke xxiii. 43.

Nor would it be difficult, had we room for it, to account in another manner for the scriptures so frequently referring the rewards of christians to the judgment-day.

But it is time to proceed to another observation:

3. We may infer hereupon, that the spirits of good men, when they leave the body, are received by the Lord Jesus into a state of happiness with himself.

He is the Lord of that world into which souls depart when they leave this world by death; he is that grand person *who liveth and was dead, and is alive again, and lives for* Rev. i. 18.

\* Paradise, or the garden of Eden, was the generally received name, at that time, for that state of happiness into which separate spirits of good men were thought to be received, and to remain there in expectation of the resurrection of the just.

SERM. *for evermore ; and hath the keys of hell (or*  
 X. *the invifible world) and of death.* None

of his fervants leave this world without his permission. If *a fparrow fall not to the ground without our heavenly Father*, certainly a faithful difciple of his Son fhall not die without the fpecial cognizance of his Lord and Mafter. And as foon as ever the holy foul paffes out of the body at death, and enters into the world of fpirits, it is taken under his fpecial protection, and fixed in the manfion prepared for it among *the fpirits of juft men made perfect* : where they are in a ftate of real happinefs ; free from all the remainders of corruption within, and temptation without, from all the incumbrances of a frail body, the clogs of dull mortality ; where they are compleat in moral righteoufnefs and holinefs ; have the final, the everlafting falvation of their fouls fecured ; enjoy a pofitive happinefs from being prefent with the Lord ; and wait with moft pleafing, not uneafy, expectation the full confummation of their blifs in the judgment-day.

Mat. x.  
29.  
  
Heb. xii.  
23.

How bleffed an alteration, in this view, does death make at once in the ftate and circumftances of every fincere chriitian ! From pains, and groans, from agonies and convulfions, to joy and praife, and eafe, and full liberty of fpirit ! from a ftate of diftance,

a world

a world of trouble, sin, temptation, and SERM.  
darkness, to the presence of his glorified X.  
Lord ! to a state, where all his conflicts shall  
be for ever over, his doubts and darkness  
shall all vanish ; his fears be all at an end,  
his trial happily finished ; and light and  
knowledge shall fill up all his understanding,  
and his divine love be raised to its highest  
and noblest perfection ! What an happy  
exchange did Stephen make ! how sudden  
and joyful ! this moment falling into the  
dust, under a shower of stones ; the next  
received by Jesus, to be with him in glory !  
And how grateful a thought, that what would  
be the last effect of his enemies malice,  
would turn to his greatest advantage ; relea-  
sing him from the confinement of the body  
to be with his Lord, and not only to be-  
hold, but to partake of his glory !

4. We may derive from such a subject  
relief and comfort on occasion of the death  
of our pious friends.

This is a sore evil under the sun ; the  
parting with those who are near and dear  
to us, as our own souls, by death. And the  
wound which the separating stroke makes  
is often deep and lasting, and fills the soul  
with real and substantial sorrow. But in this  
case also, the supports and consolations of chri-  
stianity are abundantly sufficient ; and espe-  
cially the consideration of their happy sepa-

Q

rate

*Mark*



SERM. rate state. If our departed friends were

X. truly religious ; if we have good ground to believe, that they were sincerely devoted to God and the Redeemer ; we may then persuade ourselves, that they have made an exchange of worlds infinitely for the better. Though we miss them in the places where

Ifa.

xxxviii.

II.

*behold them no more in this world with the inhabitants of it :* yet we are not to say, they are lost ; nor to stand weeping at their tombs, as if their whole persons were confined there. For it is only their more ignoble part that is there lodged : the nobler, the inspiring part, their spirit is gone to another and infinitely more desirable state. They are got where they chose to be ; whither it was their chief aim and desire at last to reach : at rest in peace, with Jesus their exalted Lord and head ; in much better company, and engaged in much more noble employments, than any can possibly be in this wretched world of ours. — They are there, from whence they would by no means come back again to dwell here, (as much as they once loved us,) if they might have their choice, upon any consideration whatsoever. — Nay they are there, whither, if we are true christians, we hope and wish, above all things, to ascend ourselves ; and

are

St. STEPHEN's dying prayer.

227

are waiting till the blessed change shall come. SERM. X.

And can we, with such a view of things, lament our pious friends that have left us, with an inconsolable sorrow? What is the real ground of such a concern? Is it that they have got the start, and are happy before us? But is not this a spirit of envy and selfishness, rather than the noble christian benevolence? Should we be sorry, because their joy is full? we be grieved more, only because they can no longer mix their tears and groans, and sorrows, with ours; but are got safe to that world, where *sorrow and sighing for ever flee away*? — “No; but we would have them still longer with us.” — But who is the best judge, how long they are to continue here? Their Lord and Master, to whom they live and die; or we their poor fellow-servants? Surely he that appointed their station, and their work, knows best when their season of trial is to be over, and their reward to succeed. And we may be sure, that they themselves will never reckon that exchange too soon, which brings them to *the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls*. Job xiv. 14.   
 Isaiah xxxv. 34.   
 1 Pet. i. 9.

In a word; we may learn this excellent medium to be preserv'd in our sorrow for those who are dead from us, as fully comprised in this short, but judicious exhortation.

SERM. tion: "Let us weep as men; but weep as

X. "though we wept not, because we are Chris-  
 tians." —

5. We may gather from this subject, That the Lord Jesus will receive no departing spirits to himself at death, but those who have been his faithful devoted servants here, and have followed him to the end of life.

'Tis true, the life and death of Stephen were both extraordinary. But the same temper and disposition, in kind, which carried him through all his extraordinary work and labours and sufferings, will be found in every true disciple and servant of Jesus Christ: *i. e.* a governing love to his Master, and a readiness to discover that love to him in whatever way he appoints him. And if it must work, if he is called to it, in *resisting even unto blood, striving against sin*; much more, surely, in a steady course of obedience, in those instances where the christian is excused such severe and awful proofs of his fidelity.—And only persons of such a complexion of spirit as this can hope, on good grounds, to be received by Christ at last.

Heb. xii.  
4

Let the careless part of our hearers consider this a little. If it was certain, that all promiscuously were to be received by Christ when they left this world; then there might be some pretence for living at random, and contenting themselves with only a:

Lord



*Lord have mercy! Lord receive our souls!* in SERM.  
the article of death.—But when we know, X.

and are assured, that according to the dispositions with which men die, so is their final and everlasting state to be determined; that

then, *he that is filthy shall be filthy still, and* Rev. xxii.  
*he that is unrighteous must be unrighteous still,* 11.

and *he only that is holy will be holy still*: can it be soberly thought, that any but a holy sanctified soul shall be received by a holy Jesus, to the society of pure and holy spirits; be received by him, who is *the author of* Heb. v. 9.  
*eternal salvation only to those that obey him?*

O consider, Sirs: as ever you would be able to offer up this dying request with comfort, many serious prayers must have gone before. If you would recommend your departing spirits with a consistent decency, in the last and most solemn hour of all, to the Lord Jesus; remember, you must have had many serious and solemn transactions with him in a way of devotion beforehand. You must have been thoroughly acquainted with the terms of the Gospel-covenant; you must have heartily consented to them, and yielded yourselves to him thereupon: for these terms he will unalterably stand, and to these terms only you are to trust. You must cordially receive Christ Jesus as your Lord,

SERM. offered in the Gospel now, as ever you

X. would apply to him to receive you then,  
 when you shall reckon your eternal all at stake! \* —

Believe me: if you have never come to a point in this most necessary business in all the world; the more tender your spirits are, the more will doubts and fears then distress your minds, and render your last pillow very uneasy.

But

\* The following passage from the excellent Mr. Baxter is too apposite and striking, not to deserve to be inserted here.

Vol. 4th.

p. 867,

868.

Lu. xxiii.

42.

“ O that you would consider; how much it is your own  
 “ work now, and how much it resteth on your selves, what  
 “ Christ shall then do with you! Then you will cry to him  
 “ for mercy: O cast not away a miserable soul! *Lord, receive*  
 “ *me into thy kingdom!* But now he must intreat you to be  
 “ saved, and to be the people that he may then receive;  
 “ and you will not hear him. And if you will not hear  
 “ him, when he calleth on you, and beseecheth you to re-  
 “ pent and prepare; as sure as Christ is Christ, he will not  
 “ hear you, when you call for mercy in this, your too late,  
 “ extremity! It is you that are to be intreated, that Christ  
 “ may receive you; for the unwillingness and backward-  
 “ ness is on your part.” — “ O Sirs! (as that excellent holy  
 “ preacher proceeds) “ if this were the hour, and you were  
 “ presently to be received or refused; would you blame me  
 “ to cry and call upon you with all the fervour of my soul,  
 “ if I knew it were in your choice whether you would go  
 “ to heaven or hell? — Why now it is in your choice! Life  
 “ and death are set before you. Christ will receive you,  
 “ if you will but come within the capacity of his accepta-  
 “ tion. If you will not, there will then be no remedy!  
 “ O then, for your soul's sake, pity those souls now, that  
 “ then you will beg of Christ to pity! The door of grace  
 “ is as yet open; but one stroke of an apoplexy, or a vio-  
 “ lent

*St. STEPHEN's dying prayer.* 231

But if you have complied with the Redeem- SERM.  
er's terms, and he has been acquainted with X.  
your spirits in such solemn transactions, and  
you have endeavoured to act a consistent part  
through life; then may you perform this last  
act of devotion (but thus only you can do it)  
with dignity and joy.

"lent fever, may quickly shut it.—O! did you but see de-  
parted souls, as you see the corps that is left behind! Did  
"you see, how they are treated at their removal from flesh;  
"how some are taken, and others left; some welcomed  
"by Christ, and others abhorred, and delivered over to the  
"tormentor: surely you would enter into serious confide-  
"ration this day, what it is that makes this difference, and  
"why Christ so useth the one, and the other; and what  
"must be done now, by the soul that would be received  
"then."







## SERMON XI.

The peculiar excellence and power  
of our Lord's discourses.

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JOHN vii. 46.

*—Never man spake like this man,*

SERM.  
XI.

ver. 32..

**T**HIS was the answer, which *the officers* returned to the *chief priests and pharisees*; who, we are informed, *had sent them to take Jesus* as a prisoner, because the multitude were so captivated with his discourses, and so astonished at his works, that they were ready to own him as the Christ, the long-expected Messiah. The officers went with a full design to obey their masters orders, and execute their commission. Accordingly they mingled themselves with the common people who attended on the ministry of Jesus, and watched every opportunity

portunity that they might, if possible, lay hands on him. Yet, after all, notwithstanding the inclination of some to seize him, we find the officers return to those that sent them without their prisoner. And upon being asked by the chief priests and pharisees, *why they had not brought him*, they answered: *Never man spake like this man!* q. d. "We went with a design to execute your commands: but after we had attended and heard him for some time, instead of being able to lay hold on him, our resolution was quite disarmed; we were so struck and affected with what he spake, like to which we never heard any thing before; and therefore could not find in our hearts to offer the least violence to him."

*How forcible are right words!* How great the efficacy of divine truth on the hearts of all, who, at the bottom, are honest and sincere? And how soon are those prejudices which are only owing to weakness of mind, or want of better information, overcome by its sacred dictates? And how happy the change which it makes in the tempers and dispositions of men? See here the officers, who came to seize Christ as their prisoner, made the captives of his tongue; and instead of binding him, they are surprizingly fastened and bound themselves!

SERM. selves ! bound, not with chains of iron, but  
 XI. with the strong and sweet influence of those  
*gracious words that proceeded out of his*  
 Luke iv. *mouth !* Their attention was fixed, their  
 22. hearts dissolved ; and their whole souls felt  
 the energy, the wisdom, and the power  
 wherewith he spake. And hereupon they  
 cry out as with one consent : *Never man*  
*spake like this man !*

V. Wolzo  
 genius in  
 loc.

Strange things are spoken of the force of  
 human eloquence ; and surprizing have been  
 its effects. It is reported of one Hegesias,  
 a celebrated orator, “ that he painted the  
 “ evils and miseries of human life in so  
 “ strong a manner, and so impressed the  
 “ minds of his hearers with the represen-  
 “ tation, that many of them chose to de-  
 “ stroy themselves, rather than continue  
 “ in a life which appeared worse than  
 “ death.” And it is related of Mark An-  
 tony, “ that by his eloquence he so awed  
 “ and struck the soldiers, which were sent  
 “ by Marius and Cinna to execute him, that  
 “ they only brandished their drawn swords,  
 “ and then sheathed them, without per-  
 “ forming their orders ; so that he was dis-  
 “ patched by the commanding officer, who  
 “ came after his discourse was over.”—But  
 behold a greater than any of these here !  
 and see the superior force, not of studied  
 and laboured human eloquence, but of di-  
 vine



vine truth spoken in a plain open undis- SERM.  
guised manner. These officers were not XI.  
diverted from their purpose by any artful  
address which Jesus made to them in his  
own behalf, nor by any powerful or pleasing  
intreaties of his to let him alone; but by the  
power of the plain undisguised doctrine of  
true religion and solid virtue, which he  
spoke so as never any one spoke it before.

You may here also take notice of the ingenuity and honest courage of these officers in returning this answer to their masters. They seek no excuses; they are under no confusion, no hesitation on being asked: *Why have ye not brought him?* They might have alledged a want of opportunity, or a fear of the multitude; or they might have gone off and not returned at all. But, on the contrary, they return, and boldly tell the plain truth, though they might reasonably expect it would expose them to the contempt and scorn of their rulers, if not to severe punishment. — “ We have no other  
“ reason to alledge, why we did not seize  
“ him, but this: that we were so struck  
“ with what he said, that we could not  
“ find in our hearts to lay hold on him.” —  
See here the good effect of truth on honest minds; it makes men bold in the confession and acknowledgment of it! And an acknowledgment sufficient to convince their chief

SERM. chief priests and scribes, that though they  
 XI. had not brought Jesus, yet they had cer-  
 tainly been with him.

Lastly ; observe, in some measure, a fresh proof of what our Lord had before said would be the effect of his doctrine in all honest men, viz. that their prejudices would yield to the truth of it. These officers seem to return abundantly convinced that Jesus

V. ver. 17. *did not speak of himself*; (not out of any carnal or worldly views, for self-interest;) but that he appeared more like a divine teacher than any one they had ever heard before.

Here then it will be proper

I. To enquire, what there might be in our Lord's discourse which gave such an extraordinary turn to the minds of these persons, and obliged them to return so very peculiar an answer.

And this will make way

II. For some suitable reflections in an application.

I. Let us enquire, what there might be in our Lord's discourse which gave such a peculiar turn to the minds of these persons who were sent to take him, and obliged them to return such a remarkable answer?

—Instead of seizing him, they dared not to lay

lay hands on him; and for this reason SERM.  
only, as they told their rulers: *Never man* **XI.**  
*spake like this man.*—No? What then did   
he say? and how did he say it?—This na-  
turally leads us to suppose, that there was  
something peculiarly excellent in his doc-  
trine, and in the manner of his delivering  
it.—Let us dwell a little on each of these  
thoughts.

1. There was truly something very un-  
common and extraordinary in the doctrine  
of Jesus; so that on this account it might  
most justly be said: *Never man spake like*  
*him.*

This would evidently appear, if I were to  
go over the whole doctrine of the gospel as  
delivered by him. A doctrine, the most  
worthy of God, and the most suitable to  
mankind: a doctrine which none of the  
wisest men of this world knew; and which  
exceeded all that the holy men of old, and  
the inspired prophets ever delivered, even  
Moses himself not excepted. For the strict-  
ness and purity of his moral instruction; for  
the plainness and yet sublimity of his hea-  
venly doctrine; for the clear and bright  
discoveries he made; and for the grand mo-  
tives wherewith he enforced his doctrine; it  
may be truly said, that *no man ever spake like*  
*this man.* And the more frequently we  
read the gospel, and go over the several  
parts



SERM. parts of his doctrine, and the better acquaintance we have with the whole compass of it, the more will our pleasing wonder and admiration rise.

But the men, whose answer the words of my text were, had not probably heard or known much of his doctrine before. It seems to have been one particular part of it which struck them: that which they had then heard, while they attended with a view of taking him.—Let us then at present confine our views to that, and see, what there was in it which was suited to affect them in such a manner; and whether there was not enough there to justify them in this account of him.

Here then it is worth observing, that upon their first coming with an order from their rulers to take him, Jesus directed his discourse in such a manner as at once to convince them that he knew their errand; and to strike them into an awe and reverence of himself, by discovering that he had that knowledge. With this view, no doubt, he thus addressed himself to the multitude, among whom were the officers watching an opportunity against him. *Then said Jesus unto them: Yet a little while I am with you, and then I go to him that sent me. And then ye shall seek me, and shall not find me; and whither I go, ye cannot come.* Which words are

ver. 33.

ver. 34.

are thus paraphrased, q. d. " Ye trouble SERM. 2  
 " yourselves to no purpose to take me, till XI.  
 " the time for that work which my Father Clagget  
 " sent me to do is expired, which is now in loc.  
 " at no great distance; and after that, when  
 " ye have done all your pleasure, I tell  
 " you before hand, ye shall be disappoint-  
 " ed in your main design, because I shall  
 " at last return to him whose embassador I  
 " am. For although you can easily tell  
 " where to find me now; yet then I shall  
 " be quite out of your reach, and be re-  
 " ceived into a place where ye cannot fol-  
 " low me."

Now it did, (saith this judicious writer)  
 without question, startle these officers to hear  
 our Saviour reflect so plainly on the business  
 they came about. This argued him to be a  
 prophet; being something like Ahijah the pro-  
 phet's discovering the wife of Jeroboam, who 1 Kings  
 came disguised on purpose to deceive him: xiv. 6.  
 or rather, as our Lord struck Nathaniel by  
 telling him: *Before that Philip called thee,* Jo. i. 48.  
*when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee.*  
 And being thus struck with an awe and re-  
 verence, these officers were more easily led  
 to attend on him still. And it is very proba-  
 ble (says the same author) that during their  
 continued attendance, they heard him say  
 many things for the instruction of the peo-  
 ple in faith, and in a good life, and which  
 the

SERM. the evangelist did not think needful particularly to mention ; and they might attend on him more than one day.

XI.

ver. 37.  
38.

But then there was one particular part of our Lord's discourse, which St. John hath mentioned, which appears from its own nature, and the circumstances attending it, well suited to affect them in an extraordinary manner ; and, it is probable, had this peculiar influence on them. And it is this : *In the last day, that great day of the feast (the eighth day) Jesus stood and cried, saying : If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters.*—The people easily understood what he meant by this allusive way of expressing himself. He explained *coming to him and drinking*, in the former verse, *by believing on him as the scripture hath said*, in the latter. And the offers that he here made them on believing on him were extremely grand ; such as they had never heard proposed from any teacher before, q. d. “ Who-  
“ ever comes to me, with an honest and  
“ sincere desire of knowing his duty, shall  
“ receive from me all that spiritual instruc-  
“ tion, with that knowledge of the true  
“ doctrine of eternal life, and the only way  
“ to obtain it, which shall afford greater sa-  
“ tisfaction and refreshment to his restless  
“ and



“ and inquiring mind, than natural water SERM.  
“ yields to him who is ready to die with XI.  
“ thirst. And he that truly believes in me,   
“ so as to become my sincere disciple, shall  
“ receive a full supply of all spiritual gifts,  
“ not only enough to satisfy himself, but  
“ shall become himself a lesser spring, from  
“ whence the waters of life shall be de-  
“ rived down to succeeding ages. And  
“ this shall be in him an earnest and pledge  
“ of eternal life at last.”

This then was the extraordinary point of doctrine, which he then more particularly insisted on ; this the grand invitation which he made to his hearers at this time : an invitation well suited to command their attention, to convince them that he was some extraordinary person, and to engage their hearts.

Especially, if we take in some special circumstances which attended this discourse ; both the time, and the occasion of it, served to render it more striking.

It was you know, *on the last, the great* ver. 37.  
*day of the feast of tabernacles* ; a feast instituted by God, in thankful commemoration of their fathers living in booths and tabernacles in the wilderness. This feast lasted seven days ; the last day was observed with peculiar solemnity, and as an holy convocation, with more joy and triumph than  
R any

SERM. any of the rest; when the people crowded

XI. together with greater zeal, ready soon to depart every one to his own distant home—

V. Light-  
foot, Hor.  
Heb. in  
loc. p.  
569.

On this last great day of the feast, as well as on the seven preceding ones, it is observed to have been an old custom of the people to fetch water from the pool of Siloam; in commemoration of the miraculous supply which their fathers had of water struck out from a rock: some of this water they drank, and the rest they poured out; partly as a drink offering to God, and partly with prayers for obtaining rain against their approaching seed-time: the people singing, as they fetched the water, those words of the prophet Isaiah: *With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.*—Now on this occasion, Jesus takes the opportunity to recommend his doctrine to the people, in allusion to the ceremony in which they were engaged, and to send them away with such a word, as they should not be easily able to forget. How proper and suitable such an instruction, and how seasonably accommodated to strike and affect his hearers?

Especially, when it is farther considered, that it was no unusual thing with the prophets to represent divine knowledge and instruction, and even the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom, under the notion

of

of living waters, and the pouring them out SERM.  
 on mankind. Thus Isaiah: *Ho! every one* XI.  
*that thirsteth, come ye to the waters!* Again:   
*I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and* cap. lv. 1.  
*floods upon the dry ground; i. e.* (adds the pro-  
 phet) *I will pour out my spirit upon thy seed,* cap. xlv.  
*and my blessing upon thine offspring.* Nay, 3.  
 and it is remarkable that some of the jewish  
 rabbi's themselves supposed this pouring out  
 of water at this feast to typifie the pouring  
 out of the Holy Ghost. With what force and  
 energy then must our Lord's invitation come  
 on persons so employed, when this must be  
 the plain language of it: "Is it so much  
 " ground of rejoicing to draw water out of  
 " the pool of Siloam, which does but typi-  
 " fie that pouring out of the Holy Ghost,  
 " which all your prophets have foretold?  
 " I tell you, I am he that can give you li-  
 " ving water. With how much greater  
 " readiness then should you come unto me?  
 " since on him, *whosoever believeth on me,*  
 " the Holy Ghost shall be poured forth in  
 " such rich abundance, that he shall be  
 " like a fountain always full and overflow-  
 " ing in most salutary streams: *and it shall* Jo. iv. 14  
 " *be in him as a well of water springing up*  
 " *to everlasting life.*"

This then was one eminent part of his  
 doctrine which our Lord then delivered; and



SERM. which from its own nature and the time when

XI. it was delivered, together with the special  
 ~~~~~ circumstances attending it, was admirably  
 suited to strike and affect his hearers.—And
 we find it accordingly did so. For upon
 his speaking these words, it is said:
 ver. 40. *Many of the people, when they heard this say-*
 41. *ing, said: Of a truth, this is the prophet;*
others said: This is the Christ, or Messiah. And
therefore there was reason sufficient to justify
the officers in what they said: Never man
spake like this man! “We have heard such
 things from him, which none of our most
 learned scribes and doctors of the law ever
 discoursed of. He is a most extraordinary
 person; and his doctrine beyond all that
 ever any delivered before!”

This will still be judged more evident,
 if we consider,

2. The manner with which our Lord
 spake this extraordinary doctrine: and this
 was every way worthy of so great and ex-
 traordinary a teacher.

And in general we may conclude, it was
 in a different manner from that of the
 scribes, and those who sat in Moses's seat.
 So, St. Matthew observes, at the close of
 cap. vii. the sermon on the mount: *The people were*
 28, 29. *astonished at his doctrine; for he taught them*
as one having authority, and not as the scribes.
 What then? Did not the scribes speak with
 autho-

authority? No doubt they gave forth their SERM.
rules and precepts with great airs of self- XI.

sufficiency, and in a most haughty dogmatical manner: but this authority of theirs was false and counterfeit; to prevent mens inquiry into their traditions, and so discovering the vanity and insignificance of them.—

But Christ spake and taught, as one who had a true authority from God for whatever he delivered; and who could prove it whenever he pleased. How does the dignity and majesty of the divine speaker appear in all that he says? Scarce a page of his gospels, but he appears in all the fullness of such a character. *I say unto you.* Mat. v.

“Others have delivered such and such doctrines, and given such explanations of the law; but *I say unto you*, this is its true sense and meaning.”—*My doctrine is not* Jo. vii. 16.

mine, but his that sent me. I came forth from the Father. Jo. xvi. 28.

He spake with a peculiar courage and boldness. Something of this, it is observed, belongs to every advocate for truth and goodness, and should manifest itself in their defence of it; as discovering a proper consciousness of the worthiness of that cause wherein they are engaged. But it appeared eminently in Jesus, *that faithful and true* Rev. i. 5.

witness. So that some of his hearers took notice of it, as what very much engaged

SERM. the attention of the people: *Lo! he speak-
eth boldly, and they say nothing unto him.*

XI. *There was also, no doubt, a most extra-
ordinary earnestness and fervour in his de-
livery, suitable to the vast importance of the
doctrine he delivered. When he told his
hearers: The words which I speak unto you
they are spirit, and they are life; with what
life and spirit, think ye, did he not speak?
And when he said elsewhere: These things I say
unto you, that ye might be saved; with what
a pathos must he pronounce it, whose all-
comprehending mind knew the value of
souls, and the worth of their eternal sal-
vation; for he himself freely came from
heaven to earth to become their redeemer?*

ver. 26.

cap. vi.

63.

cap. v.

34.

—And

Lastly: To be sure he spake with great mildness and compassion. By this means, while he preserved all the dignity of his character, he softened the majesty of it; so as to render it more attractive, and to encourage, instead of deterring, the approach of honest and upright minds.

Methinks I see him now in all this united glory of the greatest teacher, when *on the last great day of the feast he stood up*, on some small eminence in the temple, amidst that mighty throng, *and cried*, raising his voice to an uncommon pitch, and, in a manner more than human, awing the multitude into

into the most solemn attentive silence; while SERM.
in the stile of the antient prophets he de- XI.
livered the most gracious and condescend-
ing message that ever lips could utter: till
being overcome with wonder, love and joy,
I break forth in the astonished language of
my text: *Sure, never man spake like this
man!*

I shall now close the subject.

II. With just mentioning a few reflections; which I must leave, and would recommend to your private enlargement.

1. If from a single instance of our Saviour's teaching we may so reasonably conclude this his extraordinary character, how much more from the whole, taken together?

Had we never been favoured with any thing more than this account in the context, we might have taken it for granted; that he who said such things as these, could never talk meanly, or really below himself: but when we peruse all his other discourses, and find the same excellence of doctrine, and dignity of character, through the whole, we have surely abundant cause to join in repeating this acknowledgment; that Jesus, even as an instructor of mankind, never had an equal.

SERM. 2. If this observation is really true concerning our Saviour's doctrine, how much
 XI. more, when connected with the works which he wrought in confirmation of it? When it appeared that *he not only spake so as never*

Mat. xiv. 2. *man spake, but that also such mighty works did shew forth themselves in him, as never appeared in any, not in the greatest prophets, before him.*

Lu. xxiv. 19. *And this was in fact the case. Thus did Jesus of Nazareth approve himself, mighty in deed, as well as in word. Surely then on the*

Mat. xxii. 16. comp. with John iii. 2. *whole, we must witness this confession: That of a truth he was a teacher come from God, since he taught the way of God in truth; neither regarded he the persons of men; and since no man could do those miracles which he did, (and in confirmation of such a doctrine) except God were with him.*

3. Hereupon how reasonable is it that we receive, and obey all that he has spoken?

If never man spake like this man, surely curiosity itself would incline us to attention. And if we find what he said was so excellent, and of the greatest importance, we must account it well worthy our acceptance! And if it appears to concern our truest interest and advantage, surely it challenges our obedience. Take heed then how ye turn a deaf ear to him! See that ye refuse not him that

Heb. xii. 25.

that speaketh in the gospel: for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, SERM. XI.
how much more shall not ye escape, if ye turn away from him who speaketh from heaven?

4. How pleasant must it have been to have attended him as his constant disciples on earth?

To have been always with him, close by him at every public instruction; to have seen his face, heard his wisdom, and felt the commanding influence of those words which he spake with that energy and mighty power, which none of the sons of men ever had before! To have beheld crowds hanging on his lips, hearts dissolving under the sacred sound of heavenly truth, and even his most malicious enemies silenced and confounded with his right answers, or just reproofs! To have been part of his family, and attended to his more private particular expositions when they were alone! How pleasing and rational an entertainment! In this view, with how much greater propriety may we say of these first disciples, what the queen of Sheba said of Solomon's courtiers: *Happy were these men, happy these his servants who stood continually before him!* for indeed a greater than Solomon was here. Mat. xii. 42

5. How truly honourable a character is that of a sincere disciple of Christ still?

He

SERM. He is the follower of no mean, no common master, but of one who *spake so as*
 XI. *never any other man spake.* He has all the reason to believe that what he said of himself, and what his disciples have said of him, was true. And though he has never had the honour of his bodily presence; yet he hath known his doctrine to be confirmed by extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost as a fulfillment of his gracious promise; and he hath still the assistance of that spirit to lead him into all truth, and preserve him to his heavenly kingdom, whither he is gone before to prepare a place for him.

Let us not then undervalue our Master,
 Mat. viii. or our profession, by being *ashamed of him,*
 38. *or his word, in the midst of a wicked and*
perverse generation; nor think it below us to yield to and acknowledge the truth as it is in Jesus. But be assured, that if we really receive his message, it will turn to our peculiar honour, and render us as acceptable in his sight as his first disciples.—In a word, let us always remember for our encouragement, what he said to his doubting disciple:
 Jo. xx. *Thomas; because thou hast seen me, thou hast*
 29. *believed: blessed are they that have not seen,*
and yet have believed!

SERMON



S E R M O N XII.

Our Lord's apprehension in the garden.

JOHN xviii. 6.

*As soon then as he had said unto them:
I AM HE, they went backwards,
and fell to the ground.*

WOULD you know whose words SERM. XII. these were, which had such an awful and astonishing an effect, as to strike the hearers of them to the ground? The context informs you, that they were the words of Jesus of Nazareth; which he spake to his enemies the Jews, and their attendants, when come to take him as their prisoner, with Judas the traitor, at the head of them. And as it had been observed of him, with

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SERM. with respect to his common teaching and
 XII. doctrine, that *never man spake like this man* :
 so may it more eminently be said of him
 Jo. vii. 46. here, when his voice was as the voice of
 God.

ver. 4, 5, 6. *Jesus, knowing all things that should come
 upon him, went forth to the multitude, and
 said unto them : Whom seek ye ? They answer-
 ed him : Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith un-
 to them : I am he. And Judas also which
 betrayed him, stood with them. As soon then
 as he said unto them : I am he, they went back-
 ward, and fell to the ground.* This remark-
 able circumstance attending the apprehen-
 sion of our blessed Lord is taken notice of
 only by St. John ; yet is it never the less cre-
 dible on that account : since we find that
 the other disciples were present with him,
 and witnesses to the whole affair ; and the
 design of St. John, in writing his gospel,
 was to take notice of some of those things
 which were not mentioned by the other
 Evangelists ; while, on the other hand, his
 mentioning others in common with the rest
 serves at once to confirm their gospels and
 his own too.

And this particular circumstance in my
 text, which is peculiar to St. John's account,
 is so very remarkable and striking, as to be
 well worthy our notice and regard.—I
 thought, therefore, that it might not be
 altogether

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altogether unprofitable, or unsuitable to the SERM.
farther services of this holy day, to employ XII.
our present time in a distinct consideration
of it. ~~~~~

Accordingly I propose,

I. To explain this passage of scripture
more fully, in its connexion with the
context.

And then,

II. To make some remarks and observa-
tions from the whole, which may be
of general use and service.

I. I would endeavour to explain this pas-
sage of scripture more fully, as it is con-
nected with the context.

We find then the Evangelist introduces
the account to which the words of my text
belong in this manner: *When Jesus had* ver. 1.
spoken these words, i. e. had publicly
instructed, admonished, and comforted
his disciples, (thus preparing them for his
approaching sufferings) and solemnly re-
commended them in prayer to God V. cap.
his xiv—xvii
Father: after he had spoken all these
words, *Jesus went forth out of the city,*
(the gates of which were open all night
in times of profound peace, and especi-
ally at the seasons of their solemn festi-
vals) *and went over the brook Cedron,* (so
called

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SERM. called, because the brink of it was shaded
XII. with cedar trees) towards the mount of

olives, *where was a garden called Gethsemane, into which he entred with his disciples:*

ver. 2. *And Judas also which betrayed him (i. e. who was gone out to betray him, and to join his enemies to that purpose) knew the place; for Jesus often resorted thither with his disciples: especially to spend his nights there during the feast, when he had continued all day in the city. St.*

John seems to mention this particular of the garden's being known to Judas, not only to serve for the farther illustrating the treachery of Judas in the after part of the history; but also to prevent any suspicion, that Jesus went there with a design, if possible, to hide himself from his enemies, in order to make his escape. For had this been his view, he would certainly have retired to some place, where the traitor would be less likely to find him.—What befell our Lord in the garden,

after his entrance there, till the time his enemies came to seize him, is related at large by the other evangelists. There we read that he was very heavy and sore amazed; that he complained of his soul's being exceeding sorrowful, even to death; that he prayed, that, if it were possible, the bitter cup might pass from him; and being in an agony he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was, as it were,

great

Matt.

xxvi.

37—47.

Mark xiv.

32, &c.

Luke

xxii. 42—

44.

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great drops of blood falling to the ground; SERM.
so that *there appeared unto him an angel from* XII.
heaven strengthening him. Thus, as in a 
garden the first Adam sinned against God,
and brought sin, and misery, and death into
the new-created world; so in a garden the
second Adam, the restorer of the human
race, began his sufferings for the salvation of
sinners.

Judas therefore, (knowing that his Master ver. 3.
used to resort to this garden) having recei-
ved a band of soldiers, came thither with the
officers and servants of the chief priests
and pharisees, with lanterns, and torches and
weapons: that so, if Jesus had concealed
himself in any secret place, they might dis-
cover him; and that, if he and his disciples
should make any resistance, they might pre-
vail against them by force of arms. But
instead of hiding himself from them, as one
afraid, or unwilling to suffer, Jesus knowing ver. 4.
beforehand, all things that should come upon him,
every circumstance relating to his sufferings
and death, (having foretold the treachery
of Judas, and being assured that the proper
time was come for him to be delivered into
the hands of his enemies; *Jesus knowing*
these things) *went forth* to meet the officers
and soldiers, and offered himself to them
willingly; asking with great sedateness and
com-

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SERM. compoſure : *Whom do you ſeek ? They answered :*
 XII. *Jeſus of Nazareth.* They ſeem to have
 ver. 5. been ſo ſtruck with the readineſs and compoſure of his queſtion, that they could ſcarce believe one ſo ſeemingly unconcerned was the perſon whom they came after ; but might rather imagine him to be one of the diſciples. Notwithſtanding all the light they had, with the advantage of the full moon, and their lanterns and torches, yet they appeared not to know Jeſus, or take him to be the perſon ; though no doubt ſome of them had ſeen him before. Some have thought that our Lord ſmote them with

Gen. xix.
 11.

Lu. xxii.
 52, 53.

blindneſs, as the angels ſmote the men of Sodom. But, whether this was the caſe or not, it appears that they did not find out which was Jeſus, till he answered, with peculiar reſolution and courage : *I am he.*
 q. d. “ What need had you to come out
 “ *againſt me as a thief, with ſwords and*
 “ *with ſtaves, and at night ? — I was daily*
 “ *teaching in the temple.* Why did you
 “ not lay hands on me there ? — If all your
 “ buſineſs is to find that deſpiſed perſon,
 “ Jeſus of Nazareth, you need not trouble
 “ yourſelves to go any farther ; *I am the*
 “ *perſon.*” And Judas ſtood with them, ſays
 St. John, *he who came to betray him,* i. e. he
 was then with them, and heard him, thus
 freely

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freely declaring himself who he was ; SERM.
 and immediately upon that, it is probable, XII.
he went up to him, and kissed him. But in-
 stead of their being able then to lay hands on Matt.
 him, no sooner had he said : *I am he, but* xxvi. 49.
they went backward and fell to the ground.
 There was a divine power and efficacy went
 along with these words, that struck his ene-
 mies down to the earth at once. And here-
 in was fulfilled by David's greater Son and
 Lord, what David prayed, or prophesied ra-
 ther, concerning his own enemies : *Let them,* Pfalm
or they shall be, confounded and put to shame xxxv. 41
that seek my soul ; they shall be turned back, and
brought to shame that seek my hurt.

We read in the old testament an account
 which bears some resemblance to this; which
 was Elijah's destroying two companies of fifty 2 Kings i.
 men with their captains, that came from the 9-13.
 king of Israel to take him. But, though
 there is some resemblance between these two
 facts, yet there is also a grand and beautiful
 difference. Elijah called twice for *fire from hea-*
ven, which came down each time immediate-
 ly, and destroyed his enemies ; and thus
 proved his divine mission as a prophet. Je-
 sus, an infinitely greater person than Elijah,
 only with a word speaking, with the breath
 of his mouth, struck his enemies to the
 ground. Elijah's fire utterly consumed the
 men on whom it fell : but Jesus, though
 with

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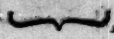
SERM. with the same almighty word only he could
 XII. have destroyed his adversaries utterly, yet
 spared and recovered them.

For though the evangelist does not mention particularly, how these soldiers who were struck down in this sudden and awful manner were raised; yet it appears most probable, that before Jesus asked them the second time: *Whom seek ye?* they were risen up again: which could not have been without the permission of Christ; or which was effected rather by the same power of Jesus, by which they were laid prostrate, and by which he could, if he had pleased, prevented their rising any more at all.—And yet it is most astonishing, that these persons when thus brought to themselves, should persist still in their design of taking Jesus: and especially that those among them, who might have known the history of Elijah, and were convinced of his being a true prophet from that attestation among others given to the truth of his character, should not be enclined to believe the divinity of Christ's mission, after experiencing such an effect both of his power and mercy, but should still renew their attack upon him. For that they did so, the evangelist tells us. For as soon as they were recovered, *Jesus asked them again: Whom seek ye?* They answered, and said as before: *Jesus of Nazareth.*

ver. 7.

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reth. Jesus answered: I have told you that I am SERM.
be; "that very person whom you seek. Why XII.

"did you not lay hands on me before, 

"when I told you who I was?"—It is ob-

servable, that the repeating these words: *I am*

be, had not the same effect which the first

pronouncing them had: which seems plain-

ly to intimate, that, besides the manner of

uttering them, there was, as I said, a secret

divine energy went along with them, which

our Lord did not chuse to exert a second

time, the former having been abundantly

sufficient to evince his almighty power; and

yet left his enemies hardened and impeni-

tent after all.—Upon saying this, our Lord

added: *If ye seek me, let these go their way,* ver. 8, 9

q. d. "If you only seek to lay hold on me,

"let these my followers have time to go a-

"way, and let them depart unhurt; lay

"no violent hands on them." Herein our

Lord showed at once his tenderness and com-

passion towards his disciples, and his power;

he demanded this safety for his disciples, as one

who his enemies knew was able to make

them again feel the effects of that power,

if they refused to comply with his demand;

and so seemed to make it a condition of his

surrendering up himself. And by making

this provision for his disciples safety, he farther

fulfilled and accomplished those words, which

he

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SERM. he had before spoken: *Those thou gavest me*

XII. *I have kept, and none of them is, or shall be, lost, but the son of perdition.*

ver. 9.

compare

cap. xvii.

12.

Thus have I considered the words as they are connected with the context, and endeavoured to explain this part of the history to which they relate.

I now proceed, as was proposed,

II. To make some remarks and observations from this whole account, which may be of general use and service.

And one most obvious, and yet well worthy our attention, is this:

I. From hence we see, our Lord's sufferings were free, and entirely voluntary.

John x.
18.

He had said before: *No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself; 'not because I cannot prevent the malice of mine enemies against me, but because I chuse not to do it; I have power to lay my life down, and power to take it again: this commandment have I received of my Father.* And as he thus declared, so the event showed he declared nothing but the truth. Till the proper time for his being delivered up came, his enemies could not take him. Notwithstanding all their attempts, and the messengers which they had so often sent to apprehend him, yet hitherto they were not able to succeed: either they could

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could not find him ; or they feared the multitude ; or the minds and spirits of those who were sent to lay hands on him, were surprizingly changed and altered by his discourses, so that they were inwardly restrained from executing their designs ; or, sometimes he withdrew himself from the midst of them. But when the appointed season came, he then was ready at hand, and became at length subject to the power of his enemies. But how ? not by constraint, but willingly. It was to this end that he came up to Jerusalem at that time, and exposed himself publicly in the presence of those who were lying in wait, if possible, to seize him. And it was for this that he now came and presented himself to them.

SERM.
XII.

It is evident, that his enemies could have had no power over him, unless he had permitted them to exercise it ; and he could at once have destroyed all their power, and for ever have delivered himself from their rage and malice. Had it not been his design that they should at length take him, could not he as easily have escaped from them, when their eyes, by his influence, were so holden that they did not know him, as Elisha freed himself from the army of the king of Syria, after he had *first smitten them with blindness* ? Had he not been willing to suffer, or chosen to avoid it, could not he

²King.vi.
18, 19.

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SERM. easily have taken the opportunity of retiring,

XII. when they were *struck down to the ground*;
 and so far from being able to lay hands on him, that they could not help themselves? Or could not he that spake them down by the breath of his mouth, either have kept them for ever in that senseless condition, or reduced them to it again whenever he pleased? Was he forced to sufferings and death, and overcome by the superior power of men; when it was by power communicated from himself that his adversaries were revived, raised up again, and so rendered capable of proceeding against him? Does this look like constraint? or can we say after all this, that Jesus was unwillingly led to prison, and to judgment, and to endure the pain and the shame of the cross? He could easily have prevented all, if he had pleased: but *how then would the scripture have been fulfilled, in which it was written, that thus it behoved Christ to suffer?* Because it pleased him of whom are all things, and by whom are all things; because it was his appointment, and an appointment which *became him*, was most congruous to his perfections, most worthy of such a God, *in bringing many sons to glory to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings*; therefore it pleased this captain of their salvation to give himself up to these sufferings in order to the perfect-

Matt.
xxvi. 54.

Lu. xxiv.
46.

Heb. ii.
19,

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perfecting and compleating this his glorious SERM.
character. XII.

And it is this freedom and voluntariness of our Lord's sufferings, which enhances the virtue and merit of them, and renders them so acceptable to God the Father, and available to obtain for us the pardon of all sin on repentance, the purification of the soul, justification, and all spiritual and eternal blessings. For it is because Hebr. ix. 14. he freely offered up himself without spot to God through the eternal spirit, that his blood is able to purge the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God.

And it is this also, that greatens the idea of the love of Jesus to us. When we consider, that he most freely and willingly gave himself up to his enemies, and to all the bitter effects of their malice, even to death; in order to reconcile us to God, to make enemies and rebels friends to God, to redeem us from hell, and everlasting misery and destruction, and raise us to life and heaven, and eternal happiness: *what manner of love, may we well cry out, is this?* And to think, who he was that hath shown this compassionate regard to us, and freely given himself for us, even the Son of God, one infinitely above us all; and what he went through in order to accomplish this great and difficult work, the redemption of fallen man; and once more, to think, that he was not surprized

264 *Our Lord's apprehension in the garden.*

SERM. into one suffering after another, without any
XII. notice or expectation of it, but that he fully,

perfectly, and exactly knew all, from the beginning : that it was from the clearest and most comprehensive view, and distinct know-

ledge of all which should happen to him, before he left the bosom of the Father, and

the glory which he had with him before the world was, that he declared his ready and joyful consent : “ Lo I come, I delight to do

thy will, O my God ! Thy law is within my heart :” that though he knew the several farther steps of that humiliation and a-

basement to which he must condescend after he took on him the human nature, yet he

chose to take on him the likeness of sinful flesh, and appear in the form of a servant ;

and to endure the cowardice or treachery of some of his disciples, the malice and in-

sults of his enemies, the contradiction of sinners against himself, and to become obe-

dient unto death, even the death of the cross : I say, when we lay all these con-

siderations together, with what wonder and grateful surprize shall we be ready to cry out :

“ As never any sorrows or sufferings, O my

“ blessed Saviour, were like thy sorrows ; so

“ never was any love like thy love ! so full,

“ so generous, so disinterested, so costly,

“ and so free !”

Our Lord's apprehension in the garden. 265

We are told, that Celsus, an antient ene- SERM.
my to, and severe writer against, christianity, XII.
made this an objection against Jesus; that
though he foreknew his sufferings, yet he
yielded to them: "whereas (says he) a wise
"man, if he had foreseen his danger, V. Orig.
"would by all means have endeavoured to cont.
"avoid it, if he could possibly have done Cels.
"it." But surely, if generals and princes p. 25.
have subjected themselves to temporary suf- Edit.
ferings and death for the sake of their ar- Spenc.
mies or their people, and have been distin-
guishingly honoured on that account; how
much more truly honourable and praise-
worthy, how much more Godlike, the be-
nevolence of the Lord Jesus, the great *cap-*
tain of our salvation, who gave himself freely
to death, to deliver a guilty world from ever-
lasting death and destruction? And would the
enemies of christianity, who profess them-
selves to be men of learning and fine sen-
timents, but attend a little to the praises
that are reported to have been given to A-
chilles, who went to the Trojan war, when
he is represented as knowing before-hand
that he should fall in battle; they surely
would be ashamed of their unjust censures
of Jesus, and might see the highest reason
to admire, love, and adore him.

But to proceed,

2. We

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SERM. 2. We may observe, how truly great and
XII. amiable the blessed Jesus appears in this
particular view, wherein his sufferings exhibit him to us.

His true greatness of mind appeared in that composure and sedateness of spirit, with which he went through all. To see him sitting at supper with his disciples, giving them the pledges of his love, and talking to them in the language of melting goodness; though he knew that soon after they would be ashamed of him, flee from him, and one of them deny him: to hear him tell them, that *one of them should betray him* into the hands of his enemies; and see, with what a frame of mind he pointed out the traitor to them: and then to follow him to the garden; see his perfect submission to his Father's will, and with what resolution and courage he came to meet the traitor at the head of the soldiers, and offered himself to them: when we steadily view our blessed Lord thus behaving, what sentiments must we not form of the true dignity and grandeur of his character? And how worthy must we account him of our highest admiration and esteem? What self-government, what subjection of passions, what elevation of soul does he discover? As much superior to his enemies in the temper of his mind, as his cause was better than theirs.

And

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And when we keep our eye fixt on this SERM.
important piece of history, till we behold him XII.
exerting the mighty energy of his godlike
power, and striking down his enemies with
a word; what a sight is here? The soldiers
at once disarmed and laid prostrate by the
person whom they came to take for their
prisoner! The men of war struck down
with all their armour of defence and wea-
pons, only by the breath of his mouth,
whom they came to seize as their captive!
How does the God appear through all the
form of a servant, and the humble guise of
Jesus of Nazareth? And with what holy
awe and profound reverence are we over-
come at so striking and solemn a represen-
tation of the majesty and power, wherewith
Jesus was manifested to be the Son of the
only living and true God, even in his state
of low humiliation and abasement!

In the original the word *He* is not found,
and therefore the answer to the enquiring sol-
diers was only this: *I am*: the most striking
answer for him to give, who was indeed that
prophet, that angel of the covenant who
had the name of God in him; that great
and all-comprehending name, Jehovah,
or *I am*. And had but those among
his enemies who were Jews, and belong-
ed to the chief priests and pharisees, (and
who therefore could not but know the writ-
tings

268 *Our Lord's apprehension in the garden.*

SERM. tings of Moses) remembered what he delivered to their fathers, concerning the angel
XII.

God promised to send before them as their guide to Canaan; they must have been unspeakably more affected when they were recovered to themselves, and made afraid of proceeding any farther. *Behold* (said God) *I send an angel before thee to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee to the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice; provoke him not: for he will not pardon your iniquities; for my name is in him.*

Exod.
xxiii. 20,
21.

But then we may observe also, that the blessed Jesus appears as amiable and lovely in this part of his character, as he does most awful and reverend. Indeed those virtues, which conspired to greaten and exalt his character, served at the same time to render it most engaging and attractive. What meekness and humility? What patience and long-suffering? What goodness and grace? Some have thought, (and indeed it seems probable enough) that Judas was not struck down to the ground with the rest of the company. And if not; does not the patience and long-suffering of the Master, and his meekness too, evidently appear in suffering the traitor to stand, and to be ready to lead on to the next attack, when the guards should be recovered by his almighty power? And could there be a greater instance of good-

Our Lord's apprehension in the garden. 269

goodness, than the recovering those into a SERM.
capacity of perfecting their wicked designs, XII.
who without his assistance had never more
been able to rise up against him? Verily, a-
midst all the display of his terrors, as well as
by his deeds of mercy and kindness, he
taught all that would learn, that *fury was* I sa. xxvii.
not in him! 4.

I only observe farther, under this head,
that the greatest contrast in characters, that
ever could appear, was that between the
master and the traitor-disciple. And the
more we dwell upon it, the more will the
former be revered and loved, and the
other appear more detestable and shocking to
every one, that has any notion of virtue and
character left in his breast.

But this leads me to observe,

3. The very great and important difference, which the words of Christ had on persons pretty much of the same character, under different dispositions of mind.

My reason for this observation I thus illustrate, from another passage in this gospel of St. John; that which was enlarged on in a former discourse.—We find that the *pharisees and chief priests*, when they could not cap. vii.
otherwise succeed, *sent officers to take him.* 32.

But, to their unspeakable disappointment, the officers returned without their prisoner. ver. 45, 46

And

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SERM. And why so? *Why have ye not brought him?*

XII. say the pharisees and scribes. The officers answered: *Never man spake like this man.*

ver. 45,
46.

These officers appear honest men; and being overcome with the wisdom and goodness of that spirit with which he spake, they could not in conscience lay hands on him, but returned to the council with wonder and surprise. In the passage now before us, officers and soldiers were again sent to take him; and they, endeavouring to do it, were struck down to the earth by his saying: *I am he*; and were raised up again only by his power. And what did they do? Why they recovered only to greater stupidity and hardness of heart.

Certainly there must have been a very different temper in these two different sets of officers: the former less obstinate, and more open to conviction; the latter more stupid and sordid, and rendered more so still, probably, by having Judas, once a disciple, their leader against Jesus.—Consider this, my fellow christians, and think of the aggravated mischief, which a professor, a disciple of Jesus does to his cause; how he hardens infidels, and leads on the triumphs of the wicked and profane, when he himself turns a traitor: and let this be for our caution and warning. *Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*

1 Cor. x.
12.

4. From

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4. From the manner in which Jesus asserted his character and divine power on different occasions, as recorded in the gospel history, we may remark the very different effect which it had on his enemies and his friends. SERM. XII.

I am he, I am, said our blessed Lord in the text; and so saying, his enemies were sore dismayed, confounded, and fell to the ground.—But this was not the first time he thus expressed himself. When his disciples were in a storm, and in their own apprehension just ready to sink, Jesus appeared to them, and said: *It is I, or I am* your Lord and Master. But that was to dissipate their fears, and encourage their hope and trust in him; and to assure them that it was no frightful phantom, nor unfriendly appearance. And therefore these comfortable words are added: *Be of good cheer, it is I; be not afraid.* — The same words, the same name that brings terrors unspeakable to the enemies of Jesus, brings tidings of joy and salvation to his friends. Matt. xiv. 24—27.

“ If then I am but secure of my title to
“ his friendship, by having the testimony
“ of a good conscience, that I am his sincere
“ disciple; I shall be able to hear him tell
“ his name with pleasure. In the midst of
“ all the various afflictions and trials of this
“ unquiet, uncertain world, when the waves
“ and

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SERM. " billows of trouble rise high, ready to over-
 XII. " whelm my distressed soul, and I cry out,
 " from the depths of adversity: *Lord! save*
 " *me, or I perish!* O let me but hear thee say-
 " ing: *It is I, be not afraid;* and the storm
 " will soon become a calm, and I shall be
 " happy in that peace which is alone thy
 " gift, and which as the world cannot give
 " so neither can it take away."

Once more; it is an easy and natural reflection from this subject,

5. If Jesus in his humbled state, and in the lowest degree of his humiliation, only with a word displayed thus his divine power against his enemies; how much more awful and dreadful will be the displays of his power, when he shall appear a second time as judge of the world?

He, who in this world struck down his enemies to the ground, yet revived them, and gave himself up to their power at last, and was by them crucified and slain; but death had not long the dominion over him. He soon rose again, and ascended to his Father, and his God. And from thence we believe he shall come to judge both the living and the dead.—But in what manner shall he come? Why no more in the form of a servant, but with all the full honours of his
 Lu.ix.27. *divine character, in his own glory, in his*
Father's

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Father's glory, and in the glory of his holy SERM.
angels. A fire shall then go before him, and XII.
it shall be very tempestuous round about him. Ps. l. 3. 4.
And he shall call to the heavens from above,
and to the earth beneath that he may judge his
people. xix. vii.

How then will the infidels and scorners,
the wicked and ungodly appear before him;
when roused from their graves, they shall
start up in horror and surprize, and ask: Who
is this? and he shall answer: *I am he!*
“ Behold the man you once despised, whose Red T. 2
“ name you blasphemed, whose cause you Q. i
“ treated with contempt and ridicule in
“ yonder world; whose laws and authority
“ you violated and trampled on, and de-
“ clared, either by your profession or your
“ conduct, that you would not have this Lu. xix.
“ man to reign over you. Here I am; now 14.
“ fulfilling my last promise, of coming again
“ to judge the world in righteousness. 15.
“ Behold then ye despisers and wonder: for Aet. xiii.
“ I am indeed he; that very person who 41.
“ endured the shame and the pain of the
“ cross, and for your sakes too; though
“ you would none of me, but rejected the
“ counsel of God against your selves! Be-
“ hold, all you that have crucified the Son
“ of God afresh, and put him to open
“ shame, that *I am he*, that very person
“ whom you have thus dishonoured: and

T

“ I am

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SERM. " I am now come to avenge the quarrel of

XII. " my covenant ; and to show that I will no

" longer bear with the wickedness and in-

" sults of unrepenting incorrigible mortals.

Lu. xix. " *Those mine enemies which would not that I*

27. " *should reign over them, bring them hither,*

" *and slay them before me.—I am he.*"—And

with this last repetition of the awful and

solemn words, all his implacable enemies

from first to last shall fall back at once ;

and sink, in one dreadful promiscuous

2 Thess. throng, into *everlasting destruction from the*

i. 9. *presence of the Lord, and from the glory of*

his power.

But, on the other hand, this grand mani-

festation of himself in all his divine glory,

will be the joy and triumph of his friends :

and when these words shall be pronounced

which shall finish the misery of the wicked,

the saints shall lift up their heads with ac-

clamations of thanksgiving and praise, and

repeat his name with delightful extasies.—

Isa. xxv. " *Yes, it is he : This is our Lord ; we have*

9. " *waited for him, and he will save us !*"

May you and I meet in this adoring joy-

Rev. i. 5. ful company ! And to him then *that loved us*

and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

shall be everlasting praises. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON XIII.

The nature and end of the Lord's supper.

I COR. XI. 26.

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

AT the 17th verse of this chapter St. SERM. XIII.
Paul begins to reprove the Corin-

thians for several irregularities and inde-

cencies; they were guilty of in celebrating the Lord's Supper: *In this that I declare un-* ver. 17.

to you, I praise you not; q. d. "I have indeed comp.

"commended you for your regard to other ver. 2.

"orders which I left with you; yet there

"is something for which I cannot com-

"mend you, even what I am now going

SERM. " to mention, viz. *that when you come to-*
 XIII. " *gether, in your public assemblies, you*
 " *come not for the better but for the*
 ver. 20. " *worse. For, When ye come together into*
 " *one place, you eat indeed, but ye do not*
 " *rightly eat the Lord's supper. For in this*
 " *common assembly ye do not eat in com-*
 ver. 21. " *mon; but every one taketh his own sup-*
 " *per, and eats it without suffering others,*
 " *especially the poor, to partake with him :*
 ver. 22. " *so one is hungry, and another is drunken.*
 " *What ? have ye not houses to eat and drink in*
 " *at your common meals, but must ye despise*
 " *the church of God, by bringing your ordi-*
 " *nary food there and eating that with the*
 " *Lord's supper ? thus not discerning or*
 " *making a difference between that and*
 " *a common meal ? What shall I say ? Shall*
 " *I praise you in these things ? I praise you*
 " *not.*"

Hereupon, that he might convince them of their error, and prevent such disorder for the future, the apostle repeats to the Corinthians the manner in which Christ himself instituted this sacred rite, and the method of its first celebration ; as he had received an account of it, probably, by some immediate revelation from Christ himself after his ascension. I have received of the Lord, that which also I delivered unto you : that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he

he was betrayed took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said: Take, eat; *this is my body which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me.* After the same manner also he took the cup when he had supped, saying: *This cup is the new testament, or covenant, in my blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.* Immediately on this account follow the words of the text, which contain St. Paul's reflexion upon this sacred institution, *its nature, end, and design:* *For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.*

In these words there are three things, which require our particular consideration.

- I. The nature and end of this sacred institution of the Lord's supper. It is to shew forth the death and sufferings of Christ by breaking and eating the bread, and drinking the wine.
- II. Here is the frequency of celebrating this ordinance hinted at, in these words: *As often as ye do this.*
- III. The continuance of this ordinance in the christian church. It is to be frequently celebrated by all professing christians, till the Lord, the institutor of it, shall come again.

SERM. I. Let us consider the nature and end
 XIII. of the Lord's supper. It is here represented
 to be *a shewing the Lord's death.*

That is; it is an openly declaring (as the Greek word signifies) this his death to the world: shewing at the same time, by these solemn actions, that *we glory in the cross of Christ*; and that, however *Christ crucified was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks, or Gentiles, foolishness, yet he is to us the wisdom of God, and the power of God.* It is a declaration to the world of our firm persuasion of the truth and reality of his death, that he did certainly die and suffer on a cross, as is declared by his evangelists: and so our coming to a sacramental table implies our solemn public commemoration of this his death and passion. But then it is not a bare recollection or thinking over the story of Christ's Death only, which is the whole that is here meant by these expressions: no; the death of Christ is to be considered in its reference to us, as that which we are most nearly concerned in. And so our public showing forth or commemorating this death will carry in the notion of it these following things.

1. A remembrance of his death as the highest instance of his love and good-will to us.

2. As

2. As a propitiation for sin, and the only SERM.
foundation for our hope of pardon and for- XIII.
giveness.

3. As that which has ratified and confirmed the covenant of grace, and so assured all needful blessings to us.

4. As a powerful argument to holiness and new obedience. And

5. As in particular a strong recommendation of mutual love amongst christians.

1. In the sacrament of the Lord's supper we *show forth the death of Christ*, as that which we esteem an instance of the highest and strongest affection to the children of men.

For we consider him as having died for us. And this is the highest mark of love; than which nothing can more fully evidence its sincerity, or its strength: *Greater love hath* Jo. xv. 13.
no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend; but herein has Christ Rom. v. 8.
commended his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners he died for us.

The consideration of this love is greatly heightened, by reflecting on the dignity of the person who thus expressed it, and the unworthiness of the objects of it, together with all the circumstances of condescension, sorrow, and bitter agonies he underwent.—It is *the Lord's death* that is here *shewed forth*; not the death of a common person,

SERM.

XIII.

1 Cor.

ii. 8.

Heb. ii.

14, 15.

but of the Lord of life and glory. He left his own glory, and his Father's glory. And in as much as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same: that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver those who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage.—The death that Christ submitted to was the most shameful, cruel, and painful; so that from the beginning to the end of his undertaking his love to us hath shown itself in the most amazing manner.

Now this sacrament I am recommending is admirably suited to bring this love to our remembrance. The rite there made use of (which is of our Lord's own appointment, and shows his wisdom and grace) is very expressive and significant: the breaking of the bread has a proper tendency to lead our thoughts to his body as broken and tormented on a cross; and the pouring out the wine to represent to us the shedding of his blood. And the meditating both on the one and the other; on the person suffering as infinitely superior to us, one worth us all; and on the persons for whom he suffered, as unworthy his notice or regard, and deserving the severest marks of God's displeasure; these considerations are all admirably suited to affect us with a sense of this divine love, and to awaken in our souls

souls the most lively and grateful resent- SERM.
ments of it. XIII.

And it surely ought to be with a correspondent disposition of soul, that we commemorate this love of Christ at his table, when we there meet together over these sacred memorials, and behold how he hath loved us. How should such a view as this strike all the softer passions of our nature, and awaken our souls to love and joy? If we were to think over the death of an eminent person, whom we had no concern with, the very fixing our attention on such a subject would, I believe, in some measure affect us: but when we call to mind the death of a friend, of the greatest, the most illustrious friend, who by his death has given the strongest assurance of his friendship, what a different effect has this upon our souls; and how much more strongly are we then influenced! — “O my Saviour! I have heard
“of thy love by the hearing of the ear: I
“have read it in thy word, and been often
“full of joy at the thoughts of it, that thou
“shouldst thus remember me in my low apostate state! *What is man that thou art* Ps. viii. 4.
“*thus mindful of him? or the son of man that*
“*thou shouldst thus visit him?* But here at
“thy table I have the fullest and strongest
“pledges of this love in my view, in my
“very hands: my heart is warmed with it,
“and

SERM. "and I feel it to be a powerful and a con-
 XIII. "straining love. O what shall I render to
 "thee for all thy benefits towards me? I
 "would labour for some answerable returns
 "of love and gratitude!"

2. The Lord's supper is a shewing forth or commemorating the death of Christ, as the great sacrifice for sin, and the only foundation of our hope of pardon and forgiveness.

Heb. ix. *The blood of bulls, and of goats could not*
 9. 13. *purifie as pertaining to the conscience: there-*

Ibid. ver. *fore Christ once in the end of the world ap-*
 26. *peared to put away sin by the sacrifice of him-*
self. And by this once offering up himself,

he is become a full and compleat sacrifice:
 cap. x. 14. *he has thereby perfected for ever them that are*
sanctified, expiated for ever their sins. And

the power and efficacy of this sacrifice, this
one offering, to purge and expiate sin was
designed by God to be as extensive as the
stain and defilement of sin; that is, univer-

1 Tim. *sal. For he gave himself a ransom for all,*
 ii. 6. *and as the propitiation for the sins of the whole*

1 Jo. xxii. *world. Now this sacrament is a comme-*
moration of this great sacrifice: a feast upon
a sacrifice; on the memorial of that sacrifice,
that was once offered, and but once. It is
not therefore a continual repetition of that
sacrifice, according to the doctrine of the
church of Rome, concerning what they call
 the

the sacrifice of the mass. Whereas, if this SERM.
 notion of theirs was true, that the body of XIII.
 Christ was really offered every time they
 celebrate mass; *then must Christ have suf-* Heb. ix.
fered often since the foundation of the world, ^{26.}
 and must still suffer every day to the
 end of time: which is directly contrary to
 the reasoning of St. Paul, who certainly
 must have understood the nature of Christ's
 sacrifice as well as the popish priests. And,
 indeed, it looks as if some other persons,
 who yet have renounced popery, were not
 thoroughly purged from the old leaven of
 superstition; when they are so fond of call-
 ing the communion table the altar, and the
 person who administers there the priest.
 For if he is a priest on any other account,
 than that on which all true christians in ge-
 neral are said to *be priests to God*; if he is a Rev. i. 6.
 priest in the strict and proper sense of the
 word; it must be, according to St. Paul,
 because *he hath something to offer*, as was the Heb.
 office of the priests under the law. But ^{viii. 3.}
 now this offering is not required of us chris-
 tians in this sacrament, nor indeed is it
 possible.

We at this ordinance only thankfully
 remember this offering of the body of
 Christ once for all, as our great high priest;
 and profess our faith in this his sacrifice;
 and

SERM. and dependance on the merits of it. The
 XIII. partaking of the sacrament is (saith a judi-
 cious writer) "not so much an actual re-
 ceiving of pardon and forgiveness, as a
 commemoration of the great sacrifice al-
 ready made for sin, even the death of
 Christ, who has obtained pardon for us;
 and as giving us comfortable ground to
 hope, that if we are sincere communi-
 cants, we may obtain an interest in this
 pardon and forgiveness." And the true
 christian at this sacred ordinance will thus
show forth the death of his Lord and Sa-
 viour, and *joy in God through Jesus Christ, by*
whom alone he receives the atonement. "O
 my God! I am a guilty creature, ob-
 noxious to thy displeasure; and *if thou*
shouldst be strict to mark iniquity, who could
stand? But I know thou hast provided a
 propitiation for sin, in the death of thine
 own Son; and in him alone I trust. I lay
 my hand therefore upon the head of this
 great sacrifice of atonement. It is here
 alone a conscience overwhelmed with the
 guilt of sin can find rest and true refresh-
 ment. And I come to this holy table to
 declare solemnly, that I take Christ Jesus
 as my only Lord and Saviour, and hope
 for pardon and salvation through him al-
 lone."

Rom. v.
11.

Pf. cxxx.
3.

3. We farther commemorate the death of Christ, as that which has ratified and confirmed the covenant of grace, and so procured all other blessings for us. SERM. XIII.

The cup of blessing which we there partake of, is stiled by Christ himself, *the new covenant in his blood which is shed for us.* Lu. xxii. 20.

Our drinking the sacramental wine therefore is not only a commemoration of *his blood, as shed for the remission of their sins* who believe and obey the gospel; but a profession also of our humble dependance upon, our thankful acceptance of, and chearful consent to the new covenant. Matt. xxvi. 28.

The first covenant, of which Moses was the mediator, was very imperfect, and defective. It was established by the *blood of bulls and goats, which could only purifie as pertaining to the flesh*, i. e. purge only from ceremonial uncleannesses. But this covenant, the apostle tells us, was never designed to be perpetual; and when it waxed old, and was ready to vanish away, was succeeded by the new and better covenant of which Christ is the mediator. This covenant was confirmed by more precious and valuable blood than the former, even by the *blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered up himself without spot to God*; and, it is established on better promises; for the tenor of this new covenant runs thus: *I will be merciful*

SERM. *merciful to their unrighteousness; their sins*
 XIII. *and their iniquities will I remember no more.*

Heb. viii.
 6, 12.

Heb. ix.
 15.

Heb. xiii.
 20.

Under this covenant there is a full provision made for the compleat pardon of all sins whatsoever; and by means of death, the death of this mediator of the new covenant, those whose guilt was not expiated under the first covenant, (because the law was weak through the flesh) might obtain a thorough remission, and the promise of eternal inheritance. For the blessings of this new covenant are vastly preferable to those promised under the Mosaic dispensation: those were chiefly temporal blessings, these of a spiritual nature. There is the great promise of the assistance of the Spirit to enable us to perform the conditions of this covenant, and the promise of eternal life at last, of an eternal inheritance, for which we are to be prepared in the present world, by the spirit's dwelling in us. Hence the blood of Christ is stiled emphatically *the blood of the everlasting covenant*; that is, of a covenant which is perfect and faultless, and for that reason never to give way to another, and the blessings of which are everlasting.

Now it is this covenant, this everlasting covenant, as ratified and confirmed by the blood of Christ, *the great shepherd of the sheep, whom God hath raised from the dead,* that we remember at the sacramental table.

The

The language of our appearance there is, SERM.
that we highly value an interest in this co- XIII.
venant which is thus well ordered in all things
and sure; that we are sensible we greatly need
the blessings of it; and that in order to our
receiving these blessings we are resolved to
stand to the terms of this covenant: and *we* Jer. l. 5.
joyn ourselves therefore to the Lord in a perpe-
tual covenant never to be forgotten. And if this
is the language of our hearts too, and we
are sincere from time to time in our cove-
nant transactions; we may then comfortably
expect a constant supply of the blessings of
it in the present world, according to our
various states and circumstances in life, and
the eternal blessings of it in the world to
come.

4. In the Lord's supper we commemo-
rate the death of Christ, as a powerful argu-
ment to holiness and obedience.

There we view Jesus, *who though he was* Phil. ii. 6,
in the form of God, yet humbled himself, mak- 7, 8.
ing himself of no reputation, and becoming
obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;
who, though he was a son, yet learned obe- Heb. v. 8.
dience by the things which he suffered. And
we are hereby taught to imitate his bright
and shining example; to learn thence to obey
the whole will of God, and go through the
most difficult services of self-denial, and bear-
ing afflictions, when called to them, without
murmuring

SERM. XIII. murmuring or repining.--The new covenant, which we here consider as confirmed by the blood of Christ, hath certain conditions belonging to it, which are to be performed by us, as ever we hope to obtain the blessings of it: and the performance of these conditions is absolutely necessary, in the nature of the thing, to qualify us for partaking of the blessings; so that herein we see the wisdom and goodness of God in appointing them. And what are these conditions but faith and repentance? A faith in the great Mediator of this new covenant; but that such a faith as shall purifie the heart, be productive of good works, and shall display itself in the holiness of our lives and conversations. And it is no other faith than this will show our repentance to be sincere; *a repentance unto salvation never to be repented of.*

2 Cor. vii.
10.

The Jews of old, every time they renewed their covenant with God, humbled themselves deeply for their past defects, and engaged themselves more strongly to persist in a course of obedience for the future. And unless we renew our covenant in such a manner, over the memorials of Christ's death and sacrifice, and eye that death of his, principally as a motive to break us off from the love and practice of sin, and to excite us to universal holiness and obedience;

dience; we shall lose the pleasure and SERM.
 advantage of such a solemnity. For we XIII.
 find the scripture representing this, as the
 great end and design of Christ's death:
He gave himself for us; for what purpose? Tit. ii. 14.
 it follows: *That he might redeem us from all*
iniquity, and purifie to himself a peculiar peo-
ple zealous of good works. He himself died Rom. vi.
unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth 10, 11.
unto God: to teach us, that we should account
our selves dead unto sin, and alive unto God;
that if before we yielded our selves too
much servants of iniquity unto iniquity, we
should now, by the consideration of Christ's ver. 13,
death and resurrection, be engaged to yield 19, 22.
our selves to God as those who are alive from the
dead, and our members as instruments of righ-
teousness to holiness: that so being made free
from sin, and become the servants of God, we
may have our fruit unto holiness, and our end
everlasting life. When therefore we show
 forth the love of Christ to us at his
 table, let us in return show our love to
 him; by yielding our selves to him on
 his own terms, accepting the salvation
 he has purchased in the way and manner he
 proposes it to us, and resolving, by the
 strength of his grace, to keep all his com-
 mandments. Thus should *the love of Christ*,
 (in becoming a sacrifice for our sins, and the
 mediator of a new covenant, by which we
 U may

SERM. may obtain spiritual privileges and eternal
 XIII. happiness,) *constrain us to judge within our
 selves, that if one died for all, then ought all
 to be dead; and that they that live should not live
 to themselves, but to him that died for them
 and rose again.* For, if otherwise we pre-
 sume to continue in sin because this grace has
 abounded, there remains no more sacrifice for
 sin; but a fearful looking for of vengeance, and
 fiery indignation to consume us as adversaries.
 And it will appear at the great day, that (tho'
 we are not to expect salvation by the merit
 of our own righteousness, yet) if we have
 not wrought righteousness and persevered
 in holiness to the end, notwithstanding all
 that Christ has done and suffered, we shall
 never be the better for it, nor admitted into
 his heavenly kingdom to sit down with him
 at the marriage-supper of the lamb.

2 Cor. v.
14, 15.

Rom. vi.
1.

Heb. x.
26, 27.

I might add,

5. We commemorate the death of Christ more particularly as a powerful argument to love and charity.

We consider Jesus as dying to make peace between God and man, and between one man and another also. And when we view him in this character as the prince of peace, our angry and tumultuous passions should cease at once: and we should *put on bowels of mercy, and be kind, tender-hearted, for-
 giving*

giving one another ; even as God, for Christ's sake, is ready to forgive us. At a sacramental table our hearts should overflow with benevolence towards all the children of men as our fellow creatures ; and our affection should beat strongly towards all our fellow communicants, and all our fellow christians, however differenced and distinguished by little party names on earth, as belonging all to the same household of faith, all heirs of the same inheritance, and who shall all meet at last together, be of one heart and one soul, and take a full and everlasting possession of the same heaven. For as *the bread which we break is the communion of the one body of Christ, and the cup which we drink the communion of his blood ; even so we, though many, yet are to reckon our selves but as one body, and as all several members of one and the same body, because we are all partakers of the one bread :* and therefore surely ought to love one another. And indeed this is declared to be one necessary way of showing our love to a God and Saviour whom we have not seen ; even our loving our brother whom we have seen.

Thus have I considered the nature of this ordinance.

I proceed now to the second general.

II. To represent the frequency of celebrating

SERM. brating this ordinance, hinted at in those
XIII. words: *As often as ye do this.*

How often the apostles and primitive christians partook of this sacrament, is not absolutely certain; but there are reasons enough, whence we may conclude, that it was much oftener than christians in the present age do. Some have thought that they made it part of the work of every religious meeting. To be sure, it was the work of every Lord's day, according to those words: *On the first day of the week* (which is the christian sabbath) *the disciples came together to break bread.* This seems to intimate it was their usual practice every first day of the week to come together, and that for this purpose.—And those disciples and christians who lived immediately after the apostles, continued in this their doctrine and example, by thus frequently eating the Lord's supper. For we find Pliny (in his famous letter to Trajan the Roman emperor concerning the christians) declaring, that 'they used to meet 'on a set day before sun-rising, and after 'other parts of worship they used to bind 'themselves by a sacrament, or solemn oath, 'to do no evil.' And Justin Martyr, an early father of the church, gives this account of the work of the Lord's day. "On a sunday, saith he, "all the christians both in city and country

Soliti
erant
christiani,
&c.

Plin. l. x.
Ep. 97.

Apol. i.

“ country meet together, because it is the SERM.
“ day of our Lord's resurrection : and there XIII.
“ we have read unto us the writings of the
“ prophets and apostles ; and the president
“ makes an oration to us, to exhort us to
“ imitate the things we have heard ; then
“ we all joyn in prayer, and after that we
“ celebrate the sacrament ; and those who
“ are able and willing give alms.”

And happy would it be for the church of Christ, if this primitive and laudable custom were again revived ; and that we in our age made the celebrating this sacrament one part of the work of every christian sabbath ! Surely the oftener we commemorate Jesus our great and illustrious friend, so much the better ; the oftener we renew our engagements to be his, the more strongly we shall be bound to him, and the more shall we be quickened to grow in holiness and obedience ! We complain that we are weak in faith, and make but a slow progress in the divine life ; and why is it ? perhaps, because we so seldom come to this ordinance, which is so admirably suited to strengthen our faith, and other graces, and to quicken us in our holy course. I doubt not, but if we were to be thus frequently at the Lord's table, we should find this great benefit and advantage by it : (viz.) that we should become more like Christ, that our affections

SERM. would be more weaned from the present
XIII. world, and we more ready to perform the

whole will of God ; better prepared for the severest trials in life, as well as more ready for death and judgment. Besides, by this means much of that unreasonable dread and terror would be taken off, which now keeps many serious and humble Christians from that solemnity. I own, indeed, it is a very sacred thing to transact with the great God the affairs of our souls and eternity ; and for this reason we ought to be very serious in such approaches to him : and it will be a terrible thing after all to be found

Pf. xxiv.

4.

among those *who have sworn deceitfully*, and dealt falsely in God's covenant. But yet, may not persons carry this matter too far, and through a slavish fear be held in bondage ; and so exclude themselves from all the pleasure and advantage, they might otherwise receive from this excellent institution ? And what has a greater tendency to raise and cherish this unreasonable dread, and keep many upright souls from this ordinance, than the thus setting it at too great a distance from all other ordinances of the gospel ? We may come and joyn together in prayer to God every Lord's day, but we must come to a sacrament but once a month : does not this look like making the sacrament an end to which all other ordinances are but as
prepa-

preparatory means? when yet after all this SERM.
institution itself is no more than one of the XIII.
means of grace, and designed, as well as the
other means, to promote our holiness. Whereas by its being set at this distance, many are apt to think, that none but the most advanced and confirmed christians are to partake of it, and those who are only weak in grace are not to communicate. Thus do we needlessly put rails, as it were, round the communion table, and so keep out many a true christian; when none ought to be excluded, but only the open and resolvedly vitious and prophane.

I have heard indeed, some persons of good understanding in the fear of the Lord object against this frequent receiving the Lord's supper; because they think it would lessen their reverence of it, and they should not communicate with that life and devotion, as when such opportunities are less frequent.—But this argument will prove too much, or nothing at all. For if there can be no reason given particular to the sacrament, why that should be slighted on the account of the frequent use of it, any more than any other ordinance of the gospel; then the consequence is plain, that there is the same reason against the frequent use of any other ordinance as of this; and if

SERM. so, then it will follow, that neither should
 XIII. we pray or come to church more than once
 a month; lest, if we came oftener, we should
 be cold and trifling in our devotions. Now
 I believe few christians would be willing to
 allow this conclusion; which yet is just,
 according to all rules of arguing.

I hope, no one will think that I am endeavouring to weaken their proper regard for this wise and gracious institution, or that I have been publishing any new notion of my own; for if they do, they are very much mistaken. Some of the wisest and holiest men, both among the dissenters as Mr. Philip Henry. well as those of the established church; have Bp. Beveridge. wished and laboured for the revival of this antient and excellent practice of making the Lord's supper part of the work of every Lord's day; and some have been so happy as to succeed in this affair, though but few in proportion. And I only desire, that those who are able would make trial of this excellent practice for some time; and if they do not find that benefit from it, which I apprehend they will, provided they are serious in their attendance, let them afterwards return to their former method,

But I proceed,

III. To take some brief notice of the perpetuity of this ordinance. We are frequently

quently to celebrate it, and continue doing SERM.
 so, till the Lord come. XIII.

Till he shall come, not to the destruction
 of Jerusalem, as some have imagined; but
till the Lord shall come a second time with-
out a sin offering to the final salvation of his Heb. ix.
 faithful servants; till he shall come as the 28.
 universal judge to gather his saints together, Ps. l. 5.
those who have made a covenant with him by
sacrifice. Then shall he take them to dwell
 for ever in his immediate presence, and to
 behold his glory; when there will be no
 need of these signs and symbols any more.

Indeed the very nature of this ordinance
 as a remembrance of an absent unseen Sa-
 viour, proves the necessity of its continuance
 in the christian church to the end of time.—
 Besides, if the disciples, who had conversed
 with Christ and seen him in all his agonies,
 and who, one would think, should ne-
 ver have been able to forget their Master,
 if they had need of such an ordinance to
 bring his love to their minds so soon after
 his departure; much more need must we
 have for it, *on whom the ends of the world are* 1 Cor. x.
come; we, who have never seen Christ in 11.
 the flesh, and have so many intruding cares
 to thrust him from our hearts and affec-
 tions.

Thus

SERM. Thus have I finished my enlargement on
XIII. the three things observed in these words.
 There yet remains the application of the
 subject. But that must be reserved to another discourse.



SERMON



SERMON XIV.

The excuses of the neglecters of the
Lord's supper answered.

I COR. xi. 26.

*For as often as ye eat this bread, and
drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's
death till he come.*

FROM these words I have, in a former discourse, taken occasion to re-
present to you, SERM.
XIV.

- I. The true nature and end of that sacred institution, which, in the apostle's language, is known among christians by the name of the *Lord's supper*. It is by eating of the broken bread, and drinking wine, to show forth his death: as what
The second sermon on this text.
was



The excuses of the neglecters

was the highest instance of his love to us; as the great propitiation for our sins, and foundation of our hope of pardon; as the seal of the new covenant; as our most powerful engagement to all holy obedience, and in particular to mutual love among christians.

II. I have considered the frequency with which this sacred service should be celebrated among christians, and attended on by them, as intimated by that expression of the text: *As often as ye do this.*—And then,

III. I took notice of its continuance in the christian church: *Till he*, the Lord, the institutor of this sacred service, *come* again, return in glory at the end of the world.

I now proceed to a particular application of this subject.

I. I infer the folly and error of the church of Rome, in giving this sacrament in one kind only to the people, and not in both.

St. Paul, from the command of Christ, saith, that we must *drink of the cup*, as well as *eat of the bread*, if we would sacramentally *show forth the death of Christ* in a right manner. But the priest says: Eating the bread alone is sufficient, and is the whole sacrament.

ment. Now any honest man, that was not SERM.
in the secret, would be puzzled to know, XIV.
how *eating the bread* only should signify 
drinking of the cup too. And so would the
papist; if it was not for that blessed doctrine
of transubstantiation, which solves all the
difficulty at once, and in an unaccountable
manner changes a small piece of bread
into the body and blood of a man. And
though neither you nor I, nor any man in
the world, not even themselves, can see any
thing, or taste any thing, or feel any thing
but bread still; yet they will face you down,
that it is the real body of Christ, and in
taking that you receive his blood as well as
his flesh; and appeal to your selves for the
truth of it.—But this has been the usual
modesty of that church; first to persuade
men out of their senses, and then to appeal
to their senses for the truth of their persua-
sion.

II. I infer from what has been said, the
obligation of all professing christians to come
to the Lord's table.

The Jewish passover was a sacred rite
instituted by God to be a standing memo-
rial of the deliverance of that people from
the bondage and slavery of the Egyptians;
and the whole people of the Jews were
commanded to celebrate this passover. And
surely

SERM. surely that person would have been esteemed
 XIV. ed a strange kind of a Jew, who should
 ~~~~~ have refused to comply with this command ;

Num. ix. nay, such a one was to be cut off from his  
 13. people.—Now the apostle saith : *Christ our*

1 Cor. v. *passover was sacrificed for us :* and the holy  
 7. sacrament is the memorial instituted by him-  
 self of this his sacrifice once offered up to God ;  
 and he himself has strictly commanded :

Mat. xxvi *Drink ye all of it.* Not only the disciples who  
 27. were then present, but (as we have seen this  
 ordinance was designed to continue in the  
 christian church to the end of time) all pro-  
 fessing christians to the end of time are  
 obliged therefore to partake of it. And what  
 right has that man to the title of a true  
 christian, who lives in the open and willful  
 neglect of this positive precept ?

One would, at some times at least, be apt  
 to hope, that there would be no person who  
 would give the least ground for suspecting  
 his christianity on this account : but on the  
 contrary, that as soon as ever the gracious  
 Cant. v. 1. invitation was given : *Come, eat, O friends ;*  
*drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved !* every  
 soul should immediately answer : Behold,  
 we obey and come ! But alas ! not so the  
 generality of our hearers. As soon as the  
 common services of the Lord's day are over,  
 our congregations, which were before ever

so numerous, now grow thin all on a sud- SERM.  
den: those who joyned with us in the other XIV.  
parts of religious worship, leave us when  
we draw nigh to the Lord's table; or else  
satisfy themselves with being only idle spec-  
tators. Thus do the generality *with one* Lu. xiv.  
*consent begin to make excuse*; as if something <sup>18.</sup>  
was proposed which would be injurious to  
them, rather than turn to their advantage.  
And they satisfy themselves with such ex-  
cuses, as they would reckon the greatest  
affront and ill manners to make to their fel-  
low mortals in matters of an inferior na-  
ture.

I shall mention some of them, and en-  
deavour to answer them as well as I can:  
and I hope that those, who have hitherto  
sheltered themselves under them, will see  
their mistake; and from hence forward  
be more ready to comply with this dying  
command of their Lord and Master.

I. Some persons object, that there is no  
absolute necessity of coming to the Lord's  
table, because a man may be saved without  
it; and why then should we lay such a  
stress upon it, or be so very solicitous about  
it?

I readily confess, that, though I have said  
this is a duty enjoined on all christians, yet it  
supposes the opportunity of complying with  
it; for where an opportunity is wanting,  
God



SERM. God doth not expect the performance of it.

XIV. And some persons may be so situated in life, (not through their own negligence, but unavoidably) as not, after all the pains they can take, to have the advantage of communicating; and in such a case, if these persons should die without having been at the Lord's table, no doubt they are safe and happy; nor are they chargeable with any criminal omission. And the reason is plain: for these persons, though they had not opportunity of joyning in the external rite, yet having those inward dispositions of soul which would have induced them to comply with such a command if they had opportunity, shall not fail of receiving the blessing; for the thing signified is always of more importance with God than the sign.—But the case is greatly altered, where persons live in a christianland, and have frequent calls to the Lord's table: there they are absolutely obliged to come, in as much as they acknowledge the right of Christ to command; and their absence can be interpreted as nothing less than a direct willful disobedience to a plain positive precept. Their conduct argues either a contempt of Christ's authority, or at least a despising the kindness and grace of the institution. And (saith a judicious writer) "where  
 "by a person's own contemptuous neglect  
 "any,

Dr.  
 Clarke.

“ any, or many, of God's exprefs appoint- SERM.  
“ ments is omitted ; then, in such a case, XIV.  
“ *he that despiseth despiseth not man, but* 1 Theff.  
“ God, who has annexed to what means he iv. 8.  
“ pleaseth spiritual blessings: and he that has  
“ the opportunity of using the means of  
“ grace which God has been pleased to  
“ appoint, and yet neglects the use of them,  
“ it is but reasonable he should go without  
“ the grace it self.”

2. Others say : They have been baptized in their infancy, have had a religious education, and never openly departed from it ; and therefore it is well known they are christians already : and why then should we urge them to any thing farther ?

This excuse has been partly answered already by what has been said concerning the authority of Christ : for it is the same authority that commanded : *Go and disciple all* Mat. xxviii. 19.  
*nations, baptizing them ;* that commands also all baptized christians, when they are capable, to partake of the Lord's supper. And therefore you are as much obliged to the one as to the other. And if you are not willing to come to the Lord's table now, if your baptism had been deferred till your riper years, you would have been as unwilling to have been baptized too.

SERM. But I shall urge this matter a little farther.

XIV. Be pleased then to consider, that your baptism was your parents act, and not properly your own. In that solemn ordinance they devoted you to God, entered you as disciples in Christ's school; praying that you might be interested in the blessings of the everlasting covenant, and promising on their part to instruct you in the principles of the christian religion, and *train you up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*. We will now suppose, that your parents have performed their part, and you are grown up, and come to the days of your choice: and is it now sufficient, do you think, to be christians only by another's christianity, and not by your own? You would take it very ill to be dealt with as children in other affairs, only of a worldly nature; and will you be satisfied to be dealt with as such only in the matters of your souls?

Eph.vi.4.

Besides; consider farther, that what your pious parents have done for you, has laid you under greater obligations, than if you had not been baptized at all: and your neglect to acknowledge this obligation, and to chuse God for your God in the ways of his appointment, argues your dislike of what they have done; and that if you could, you would have prevented it. But suppose you were



were able to set aside the obligation which SERM.  
your baptism hath laid you under, are you XIV.  
therefore free? No: your baptism is only a   
proper acknowledgment of an obligation you  
were under before; a natural obligation,  
even that which arises from the relation of  
a creature to its Creator, that is, the obli-  
gation of love, gratitude, and obedience.  
And moreover, considered as apostate crea-  
tures, you are farther under the obligation  
of a return to God through the redeemer he  
has appointed. And whether you will ac-  
knowledge this obligation or not, your duty  
still remains; and you cannot in the very  
nature of the thing be disengaged from it.  
And if this is, as really it is, the state of the  
case; how much better is it to act agreeably  
to reason, understanding, and your infinite  
obligations, than to run counter to all,  
*burst these bonds of God asunder, and cast a-* Pf. ii. 3.  
*way these cords from you?*

Lastly; consider, if God should ever fix  
you in a family of your own, with what  
satisfaction you can pretend to devote your  
children to him in baptism, while you who  
are grown up have neglected all along to  
joyn your selves to him at his table. I wish,  
that those who are now settled in the world,  
and are become parents, would seriously re-  
flect what they have been doing, when  
they have offered their children to God in

SERM. baptism, and yet neglected to come to the  
 XIV. other sacrament themselves! You have de-  
 sired your infants might be taken into cove-  
 nant with God, and partake of the peculiar  
 blessings of that covenant; and in token of  
 your desire you apply, according to divine  
 appointment, the external seal, depending  
 on God to vouchsafe the blessing. But why  
 should you desire that for your children,  
 which you are unwilling to be interested in  
 your selves? If you esteem what you desire  
 for them as the most valuable blessing, you  
 are self-condemned if you do not desire it  
 for your selves too; and if not, then your  
 presenting your children to baptism is only  
 impertinence, and the whole transaction little  
 better than solemn trifling. And how can you  
 venture to approach the great God, the searcher  
 of hearts, when this must be interpreted the  
 language of your conduct? "Lord! I bring  
 " my child; I am willing to comply with  
 " thy command in devoting that to thy  
 " service, according as thy word directs  
 " me. I desire thou wouldst adopt it into  
 " thy family, give it thy spirit to dwell in it;  
 " and let it be joyned to thee in an ever-  
 " lasting covenant, well ordered in all things  
 " and sure. As for my self, indeed, I have  
 " never complied with the other positive  
 " gospel precept, nor been willing to chuse  
 " thee as my God in a public solemn  
 manner,

“ manner, according to thine appointment; SERM.  
“ and I hope thou wilt excuse me this neg- XIV.  
“ lect, and not take it amiss, though I  
“ should never think proper to make such  
“ a public acknowledgment of thee. I  
“ hope I shall do well enough without it;  
“ nevertheless I beg thou wouldst be fa-  
“ vourable to my tender infant, and re-  
“ member that with the favour thou bear-  
“ est to thine own people!”—How could  
you offer such an address as this to God?  
And yet this seems to be the language of  
your actions, when you pretend to devote  
your child to God in one sacrament, and  
neglect the dedication of your self in the  
other?

But if you should have some regard to this  
ordinance though you have yourselves neglect-  
ed it, and thereupon should think it your duty  
to exhort your descendants, as they grow up  
in life, to partake of it; how, alas! will all  
your exhortations lose their force by the  
great defect observable in your example?  
Will they not be apt to turn upon you and  
ask: Why you neglected a duty, which you  
imagine is so necessary for them to comply  
with? And how will you bear the upbraid-  
ings of your own minds on such a reflection?  
especially, when you observe that your chil-  
dren are encouraged in their omission by  
yours, and perhaps live and die in it too;



SERM. and their posterity follow again the same  
 XIV. pattern : and so on from one generation to  
 another this ordinance is utterly disregarded.  
 This, I know, hath been the unhappy case  
 in some families ; and I would to God, in-  
 stances of such a nature were less common  
 amidst all the light and advantages of the  
 present age.

I have been the longer upon this head,  
 because it has not been so generally insisted  
 on ; and God forbid, that what has been  
 suggested should be altogether in vain !

3. Others excuse themselves from coming  
 to the Lord's table, because they are not pre-  
 pared ; and if they come unprepared, and  
 eat and drink unworthily, they imagine  
 they shall seal their own damnation.

In answer to this, let us consider what  
 was that unworthy partaking of the Lord's  
 supper, which the apostle so severely cen-  
 sures. Let it be observed then, that in the pri-  
 mitive times the christians had their *agapae*,  
 or feasts of love, after which they usually ce-  
 lebrated the Lord's supper. Now in the Co-  
 rinthian church they had run into great irre-  
 gularities at these meetings ; they often mixed  
 the Lord's supper with their common meals,  
 and so made no proper distinction between  
 them : this the apostle calls *not discerning the*  
*Lord's body*. And this unseemly manner of eat-  
 ing is stiled, *eating and drinking unworthily* ;  
 and

and those who acted thus did *eat and drink* SERM. judgment (not damnation) to themselves. For XIV. that this judgment, with which such unworthy communions were punished, was not eternal damnation in the other world, but only temporal afflictions, appears from some following verses: *For this reason*, the apostle tells ver. 30. them, *some were weak and sickly among them, and some were fallen asleep*, i. e. dead; and he adds, for this reason, they were thus judged, i. e. punished or chastened, *of the Lord now*, that ver. 32. *they might not be condemned with the ungodly world at last.*

It is, no doubt, a very great crime to come to the Lord's table, and not regard what we come for: and wilful sins committed after such solemn transactions will be greatly aggravated. But no one can conclude justly, that even an unworthy receiving, or a wilful sin after a sacrament, is unpardonable upon repentance, any more than other sins, aggravated by their having been committed notwithstanding the light and instructions of the gospel.

Besides, suppose the condemnation threatened was the most severe, it can be no advantage for a man to abstain from the sacrament on account of his unpreparedness; but should rather engage him to set his soul in order, and get ready for such a solemnity.

SERM. For if his unworthiness is habitual, arising  
 XIV. from an evil course of life, and he continue  
 in it; he cannot escape eternal damnation at  
 last, whether he receive the sacrament or  
 not. And God will never admit one sin as  
 an excuse for another.

But let me further ask: What preparation,  
 do you think, is necessary for this ordinance?  
 Is it something more than will fit you for  
 death and the eternal world? Is it a perfec-  
 tion in holiness that is required? Is it the  
 devotion of angels, and the ardour of the  
 seraphim? If so, who in this state of dark-  
 ness and imperfection will be able to arrive  
 at it? No; it is sincerity of heart that is the  
 wedding garment God insists upon. And if  
 we have this qualification, we may hope by  
 our attendance here below to be made meet  
 for the marriage supper of the lamb above.

Mat. xxii.  
 12.

ver. 28.

*Let a man then examine himself, and so  
 let him eat of this bread and drink of this cup.*  
 Let him examine himself as to his profession  
 in general, whether he is sincere in it or  
 not; whether he heartily repents of all his  
 sins; and after a serious counting the cost  
 and a careful deliberation, whether he is  
 willing to surrender himself to God in and  
 through a Redeemer; and resolves in the  
 strength of divine grace to walk in his after-  
 course agreeably to such a surrender; and  
 if he finds this is his sincere desire and pur-  
 pose,



pose, let him show that it is so by coming SERM.  
to the sacramental table, and there *showing* XIV.  
*forth the death of Christ*, as a powerful help  
to strengthen the bonds of God upon him,  
and engage him more steadily to obedience.  
But if this is not his resolution, but he is still  
inclined to indulge some favourite sin; let  
him not only abstain from the sacrament,  
but from all other ordinances of the gospel  
too: for he is equally unprepared for them,  
and ought not to hope for acceptance with  
God in any act of worship. For God hath  
declared: *The sacrifice of the wicked is an a-* Prov. xxi.  
*bomination to the Lord, how much more when* 27.  
*he bringeth it with a wicked mind?* And  
therefore *while he thus regards iniquity in* Pf. lxxvi.  
*his heart, he cannot expect God will hear* 18.  
*his prayer.*

4. Lastly; there are others who object, that  
though it is their duty to come to the Lord's  
table, yet it is at present full soon enough;  
and therefore they had rather defer it for  
some time longer.

But I beseech you to consider; if it is your  
duty; can it ever be too soon for you to  
comply with it? You are capable of chusing  
your employments in life, of understanding  
your worldly business; and are you not ca-  
pable of chusing, whom you will serve as  
your God too?

SERM.

XIV.

It is true, there are not many who come early to a sacramental table ; but this is no argument against the reasonableness of the thing. I am sure, there are great advantages attending an early dedication : thereby you will secure the divine favour ; you will be better strengthened against every snare and temptation which you may meet with in after-life, and better prepared too for all the trials and afflictions of the present world ; you may more reasonably expect the blessing of God on your worldly affairs ; you will be likely to make a greater progress in holiness, and have a more solid and well-established peace of mind ; and lastly, will be more able to rejoice in the prospect of death and eternity. Whereas if you put off this important work to a more convenient season, you will be more unwilling to comply with it ; your excuses will multiply upon you ; you will be ashamed you have not done it before, and so be apt wholly to neglect it.

I have heard some persons profess their willingness to come to this ordinance ; but they have desired to defer it for some time, because they hoped to prevail with others of their near relations to come with them. This desire, I confess, is very commendable ; nor will I deny, but if it is sincere, and does not arise from a negligent temper, such persons might wait a little to bring about  
so

so valuable an end. But if after they have waited, they still find their friends draw back; it is their duty to comply without any longer hesitation. And they have much more reason to hope, that God will bless their persuasions and entreaties of their friends when they themselves are found in the way of their duty, than they could have if they neglected their proper duty on such a pretence.

Again, consider the danger of delaying; and how provoking it must be to the great God! He will not always wait upon trifling worms! It is infinite condescension, that the King of kings and Lord of lords will at all enter into covenant with sinful dust and ashes! And if after he has thus waited on you, and time after time invited you, you still defer your compliance; how much reason have you to fear lest he take you away in his anger, and never allow you another opportunity of this nature? And if you should be so unhappy as to put off this necessary work till sickness and death seize you; think a little, how heavy the reflection on your neglect will lie on your minds in that awful hour! I cannot enforce this consideration in a stronger manner, than in the words of a judicious divine. “I have often, says he,

“in the course of my ministry, been called to attend sick and dying beds; and have  
“made

Dr. Harris, self-dedication, pag. 124.



SERM. " made this observation in almost innume-  
 XIV. " rable instances, that, if there has been  
 " any knowledge of religion, and any sense  
 " of God left upon the mind, to be sure  
 " this has been one of the heavy complaints:  
 " O that I had attended the Lord's table !  
 " I have lived all my days in the neglect of  
 " that solemn ordinance. I have been long  
 " convinced of my duty, and often purpo-  
 " sed and designed to come: but one thing  
 " or other always prevented ; some business  
 " of life, or scruple, or impertinent excuse  
 " has kept me away. If it please God to  
 " raise me up, and restore me to farther  
 " means of grace, I will no longer trifle,  
 " but set my self to serious preparation : and  
 " if not, Lord pardon so great a neglect of  
 " my whole life !"—And says the same  
 author : " I can tell you of some persons  
 " of a religious education and extraordinary  
 " knowledge, who not only grew negligent  
 " themselves, but undertook to justify o-  
 " thers in their neglect too ; who yet upon  
 " their dying beds, when conscience has  
 " been awakened, have owned their rash  
 " folly, and bitterly lamented their sinful  
 " neglect."

Thus have I considered some of the  
 excuses, which professing christians satisfy  
 themselves with in the neglect of a plain  
 duty ; and attempted to answer them.

And

And if what I have said reaches the case of SERM.  
any soul, be not displeased that I have used so XIV.  
great plainness of speech ; but rather willingly admit the conviction, and suffer it to have its due influence upon you : and then there is reason to hope, that you will no longer exclude your selves from the pleasure and advantage of this sacred ordinance.—And O how happy should I be, if I may but have been this day instrumental in persuading one youthful heart thus to devote it self to a Redeemer, and willingly to enter into the sacred bonds ! What a divine pleasure, what a sacred joy would it afford to every minister of the gospel, to see the descendants of religious parents crowding to a sacramental table ; and there putting in their humble claim to covenant blessings, chusing their lot with the saints, and resolving in the most solemn manner, that *God's people shall be their people, and their fathers God shall be their God !* How delightful, to behold them seeking the way to Zion with their faces thitherward ! and to hear them saying one to another, in prospect of the next sacrament : *Come, and let us joyn our selves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, never to be forgotten !* Then may we hope that religion shall not die with the present generation, but that in after-times, *instead of the fathers there shall rise* Pf. xlv. 16.

SERM. *rise up the children*, which shall be to the

XIV. Lord for a name, and for a praise in the  
 earth.

III. Lastly ; let those who have complied with this invitation delight in the frequent returns of this sacred ordinance.

There are some, who, though they have been prevailed with to come to the Lord's table, yet are but seldom there, and easily omit many an opportunity of communicating. How does this look, my friends, in the eyes of a prophane world ! Will they not imagine you begin to be weary of your Master's service, and of his provision, and are willing to return back again into Egypt ?

Rom. xiv.  
16.

See that you do not give this occasion for *your good to be evil spoken of*. But let the pleasure of one sacrament make you long for the return of another, and meet every such solemnity with a renewed and growing delight. Consider what is your business there, whose death you are to remember, and what are the peculiar privileges you are favoured with : and let this thought engage you to draw near with a suitable disposition ;

Rom. viii.  
15.

not with a slavish fear, *a spirit of bondage*, as the Jews approached mount Sinai, trembling under a God descending on it with thunderings and lightnings and tempests, but with a child-like spirit, *a spirit of adoption*.



*of the Lord's supper answered.*

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tion, even with a spirit of power, and of love, SERM.  
and of a sound mind, as those who ap- XIV.  
proach a throne of grace, and are to sit 2 Tim. i.  
down at their Father's table. And then on 7.  
the other hand, let the renewal of our co-  
venant engagements from time to time  
excite us to walk more becoming the chil-  
dren of such a Father, and the disciples of  
such a Saviour; till we shall be prepared for  
our Father's house above, and put into the  
full possession of our eternal inheritance.

*Now to him that sitteth upon the throne, and* Rev. v.  
*to the Lamb: to God even our Father,* 13.  
*and the Lord Jesus Christ; who is the* cap. i. 5.  
*first begotten from the dead, and the* 6.  
*prince of the kings of the earth; to him*  
*who hath loved us, and died to wash us*  
*from our sins in his own blood; and hath*  
*made us kings and priests to God and his*  
*Father: to him be glory and dominion*  
*for ever and ever. Amen.*



SERMON



## S E R M O N XV.

Trust in Christ.

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EPHESIANS i. 12.

*That we should be to the praise of his  
glory, who first trusted in Christ.*

SERM.  
XV.

**T**HE apostle, designing in this epistle to establish these gentile converts in their faith and adherence to the gospel, without submitting to the imposition of the law of Moses, begins it with setting forth, in all the dignity and grandeur of stile, the rich variety of blessings to which they were entitled by believing the gospel alone: he reminds them, that this was the original design and purpose of God, who out of his infinite wisdom contrived this wondrous scheme of grace and mercy; and then points out to them the end and important design of it.—

it.—The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (saith he) hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ Jesus: such blessings as these, viz. that we are accepted in the beloved; that we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. Herein adds the apostle, he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence, designing in the dispensation of the fulness of times to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, angels and men, Jews and Gentiles, i. e. to unite them all under one head, even in or under, him: in whom also we Gentiles have obtained an inheritance; being predestinated according to the purpose of him, who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will.—For what purpose all this? will it be now asked. The apostle answers: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first, (or before others, even before you) trusted, or hoped, in Christ.

These last words will give me occasion to discourse to you on *trust in Christ*. And in the enlargement on this subject I shall

- I. Set before you the nature of this *trust* in a Saviour. Then,
- II. Point out the necessary properties of it.

Y

And



And then conclude with a short application.

I. I am to set before you the nature of this *trust in Christ*, or what is implied in it.

It must be a delightful entertainment to the true christian to observe the several views wherein his Saviour is represented to him in scripture, on purpose to raise his regards and increase his sense of his obligations to him. Sometimes he is set forth there as the peculiar object of his faith: *Ye believe in God, believe also in me.*—At other times, as the object of his love and his joy: *Whom having not seen ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.*—Here, in my text, he is set forth as the object of the christians trust. A view of him this, admirably suited to the christians state and condition through life, and fitted to yield him true satisfaction, and solid comfort.

John xiv.

1.

1 Peter i.

8.

Here, then, let it be premised, that this *trust in Christ* respects him as the great Immanuel, the Mediator between God and us; even him into whose hands it has pleased the Father that all the important concerns of our souls should be committed, and who, under that character, is the only Redeemer and Saviour of sinners: and so it respects him in the whole of that grand and important

tant character; as him, in and through whom alone we are to receive the pardon and forgiveness of all our sins, the full justification of our persons before a holy God, the acceptance of our services, and, as the end of all, eternal life and happiness in the other world. SERM. XV.

Now *trusting in Christ* under this grand comprehensive character, may be justly supposed to include in it the following things.

1. A firm and lively persuasion of the truth of this his character, and of his ability to support and answer it in the fullest manner.

This first act of faith lies at the foundation of a proper trust.—*He that cometh to God, saith the scripture, must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of all them that diligently seek him.* In like manner, he that cometh to Christ must believe that he is invested with this character, that of being the compleat and all-sufficient Saviour of lost sinners; and that he is thereupon *able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him.* Heb. xi. 6. This indeed is a matter Heb. vii. 25.

of pure revelation, and which reason alone could never have investigated: from thence therefore the christian derives all his assurance on this head. He receives therefore the gospel-testimony and witness concerning Christ, as what is really given him by God;

SERM. and hereupon owns and acknowledges him

XV. to be that great and divine person there represented. His claims and pretensions are thus

Jo. xii. 46. recorded there : viz. " That *he came to be the*

Jo. iii. 46, " *light of the world; that he was the only be-*

47. " *gotten Son of God, and sent of him into the*

" *world, not to condemn the world, but that*

" *the world through him might be saved; that*

" *he is the way, the truth, and the life, and*

cap. xiv. " *that no man cometh unto the Father but by*

6. " *him : and that whosoever cometh thus to the*

cap. vi. " *Father by him, he will in no wise cast*

37. " *him out, neither should he perish, but ob-*

" *tain everlasting life.*" These and such

like declarations, which Christ is reported to

have made of himself while on earth, the

true christian heartily assents to, as so many

faithful sayings. He finds, that this extraordi-

nary person not only himself died in the firm

belief and persuasion that he was to sustain

this important character, and fulfill all these

great declarations; and that he thus sealed the

truth of them with his own blood, in firm

and certain dependance on God for a speedy

resurrection from the dead, as the fullest

attestation that could possibly be given to

his mission : but also, that he was according-

ly raised, and is gone up into heaven, and

reigns in glory and immortal life there, in or-

der to finish and compleat such a character in

every part of it. He hath all the evidence

that



that unprejudiced reason can desire for the SERM.  
truth of this resurrection of Christ, and his XV.  
ascension to glory, and his having all power  
in heaven and on earth committed into his  
hands: and he cannot but regard him  
as hereby sufficiently *declared to be the Son* Rom. i. 4.  
*of God with power*; and most abundantly  
qualified and suited to be all that to him,  
and do all that for him, which a Saviour, a  
compleat Saviour implies.

As this therefore may be supposed the  
language of Christ to those who apply to  
him under this character, (like to that with  
which he addressed the blind men in the  
gospel, when they sought to him for a cure:) Mat. ix.  
*Believe ye that I am able to do this?* So, with 28.  
them, the christian replies: *Yea, Lord!* “ I  
“ believe: I am fully persuaded of the truth  
“ of thy character, and thine abundant a-  
“ bility to answer it. I heartily assent to this;  
“ and am quite satisfied, that as *there is no*  
“ *other name given under heaven by which* Acts iv.  
“ *men can be saved,* but thine, so thou art 12.  
“ every way equal to the great undertaking,  
“ and almighty to save!”

Hereupon follows,  
2. A hearty acquiescence in, and accep-  
tance of him, in this great and amiable cha-  
racter.

The soul, thoroughly convinced of sin,  
and of its awful demerit, that desires

SERM. nothing so much as the special favour and  
 XV. friendship of God, and dreads nothing so  
 ~~~~~ much as his displeasure, will be naturally  
 led to some such serious thoughts as these:

Mic. vi. 8. "*How shall I come before the Lord? Who shall*
 " mediate between me and the offended
 " Majesty of heaven? How shall I have
 " access to him as a penitent, with humble
 " hope that I may obtain pardon and for-
 " giveness? and who will be my advocate
 " and intercessor? I have ruined my self,
 " but I cannot be my own saviour. Who
 " will deliver me from my just fears, and
 " assure me of the acceptance of my person
 " and services now, of my thorough sancti-
 " fication, and of my final justification, and
 " eternal life?"—Now to a mind labouring
 with these most serious and interesting in-
 quires, how welcome must be the disco-
 very of Christ the Saviour, as the person
 who appears to him, according to the gos-
 pel representation, every way qualified to
 answer all these his desires and wishes? And
 when it considers him as not only qualified,
 but appointed and ordained of God the Fa-
 ther for this very purpose; when it traces over
 the divine perfections in this scheme of grace,
 this blessed appointment of such a Saviour;
 1 Cor. i. and observes how, as the apostle saith, *he is*
 30. *made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness,*
and sanctification, and redemption: how
 heartily

heartily will such a soul acquiesce in him in SERM.
this view? and how gratefully will it accept XV.
of him to be all that to him, which his name
and character, as Christ Jesus, imports.

“ Yes, saith the devout christian, he shall
“ be my Saviour! I thankfully approve of
“ this method of God’s reconciling a guilty
“ world unto himself by his dear Son; and
“ I adore the depths of the wisdom and
“ knowledge of God in the design, and the
“ amazing condescension and grace both
“ of the Father and of the Son too. What
“ an honour is it even to be thus beholden
“ to such a person for my salvation? I
“ chuse to accept it in this way, instead of
“ any other; since it appears most evidently
“ *the Lord’s doing, and is most truly mar-* Ps. cxviii.
“ *velous in my eyes.* — No other views af- 23.
“ ford any proper relief to my distressed
“ mind but this; and this, as *it is a faith-* 1 Tim. i.
“ *ful saying,* is therefore *most worthy of all,* 15.
“ of my most chearful, *acceptation.* I am a-
“ bundantly thankful for this kind provision
“ of mercy, and desire to be saved by God
“ in his own way.”

Hereupon,

3. This *trusting in Christ* implies, in the
full sense of it, a solemn committing of our
selves, and all our most important concerns
to him, and a firm dependance on his per-

SERM. forming to us and for us all that his great
 XV. character imports.—This alone can manifest
 our proper trust, and show that we really
 credit what we are taught concerning him,
 and accept him as thus proposed to us.

There must be a solemn serious committing of our selves, and all our most important concerns to him.—This is to be done in some set appointed hour of devotion, in private : when the soul, retired from the world, looks first within itself, and sees its wants as a sinner, its dangers and misery, and the wretchedness of its case without a Saviour ; and then looks into the word of God, and reads, and understands the method of God's providing for the recovery of lost sinners by his Son ; and, on full and rational conviction of the truth, and a hearty acceptance of the offer, yields itself readily to God through Jesus Christ ; to God, as its reconciled God and Father, and to Jesus as its Lord, to be saved by him. Something of this kind may be supposed the language of the heart at such a season.—“ I find myself a sinful creature ; not only that I am unworthy of any favourable regard from God, but that I have merited his just displeasure. *If he were strict to mark iniquity, who could be able to stand?* I am most seriously concerned for this dear immortal soul of mine ; what will

Pf. cxxx.

2.

“ will become of it for ever? If I am not SERM.
 “ cleansed from the defilement and pollu- XV.
 “ tion of sin, and delivered from the guilt
 “ of it, I am undone! Infinitely better for
 “ me, that I had never been born! O what
 “ would I not give, what would I not do,
 “ or even suffer, so as that I might but be
 “ washed, and sanctified, and justified, and
 “ finally saved?—Yet let me not despair.—
 “ There is hope in my case concerning this
 “ most necessary thing of all to me. Me-
 “ thinks I hear a voice saying: *Look unto* Isa. xlv.
 “ *me, and be saved all the ends of the earth!* 22.
 “ Whose words of consolation are these?
 “ My trembling heart springs with joy at
 “ the sound!—It is no less than the call of
 “ a dying Saviour stretched on the cross;
 “ nay, of him, who though *he was once* Rev. i.
 “ *dead is now alive, and lives for evermore,* 18.
 “ *and is exalted to be a prince and a Sa-* Acts v.
 “ *viour.*—Blessed Jesus! I own, admire 31.
 “ and love thee under this most suitable
 “ character.—I thankfully accept thy offer.
 “ *Hosanna! Blessed is he that thus cometh in*
 “ *the name of the Lord!* And here I most
 “ solemnly surrender and commit the keep-
 “ ing of this best part within me, this soul
 “ of mine, to thee. *I know whom I have be-* 2 Tim. i.
 “ *lieved; and am not ashamed, nor afraid, to* 12.
 “ venture myself, my eternal all in thine
 “ hands! O thou wondrous lover, and friend
 “ of

SERM. " of souls, who, rather than they should
 XV. " perish, didst give up thine own life ! I am
 " persuaded that thou art both *able* and
 " willing to keep safe *what I commit to thee*,
 " and guard, and most gloriously fulfill the
 " trust."

And then this sacred transaction is repeated at every sacrament. When attentive to the memorials of a dying Saviour before him, the christian sees the worth of his soul, in the strongest and most affecting light ; sees how precious the redemption of it was, when nothing less than the blood of God's own Son in our nature was to be the purchase of it, and that it must otherwise have perished for ever ; when there he sees the surprising grace and love of the Redeemer in willingly becoming the purchase, and giving himself for this end ; and considers how well and compleatly he hath fulfilled the part of a Saviour thus far : when, I say, the christian is fixed in these serious meditations at that holy ordinance, till he, as it were, hears him calling on him to yield and commit himself to him under this character ; with what fulness of heart and soul will he then comply ? with what resolution and firmness will he renew his solemn dedication, and make a fresh surrender and delivery of himself over to him, who appears so well worthy of such a confidence ? As in that solemnity

nity Christ gives himself to us, offers him-
self to be a Saviour to us ; so therein we are
to own and receive him as such, and give
up ourselves to him ; being abundantly
thankful to him for that salvation, which we
could not procure for ourselves, which none
other in earth or heaven was worthy to
procure for us, and without which we were
eternally miserable. *SERM. XV.*

And then, lastly, hereupon follows a firm
dependance on his being all that to us, and
doing all that for us which his full and grand
character, as a compleat Saviour, imports.—
Having thus committed the keeping of
his soul to Christ, the christian rests sa-
tisfied, with a well-grounded assurance, that
he shall not be disappointed, but find all
safe and abundantly secure. And he has
the highest reason for such a dependance, in
the faithfulness of this divine person whom
he trusts : one that hath made good all his
pretensions hitherto ; one who neither can,
nor will deceive the meanest soul that
flies to him for refuge ; one whose honour
is engaged for the security of all those who
have committed themselves to him.—This
dependance of the christian is not a little
strengthened by the thought of the com-
passion of his Saviour. A compassion, which
brought him from heaven to earth, from
the adoration of angels to the scorn and
contempt

SERM. contempt of sinful men, from the bosom
XV. of the Father to the humiliation and death of

the cross; and which having carried him thus far, to undertake the greater, will most certainly engage and incline him to do the rest: especially since he has carried our nature up to heaven with him, and wears the same merciful and compassionate disposition there, which he did on earth. *He is, saith the*

Heb. ii. apostle, *both a merciful and faithful high*
17. *priest in things pertaining to God; or with respect to his managing and transacting the affairs of men with God, the great affairs that concern their everlasting salvation: and it behoved him to be such an high priest in order to his fulfilling the Saviour's part; and to this end it behoved him to be made in all things like unto his brethren, the children of Abraham.* For we have not an high

Heb. iv. priest which cannot be touched with the feeling
15. of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. So that we may have sure hope and confidence in him, whose compassions fail not.—Especially, if we take also into the account his all-sufficiency, as a farther ground of this dependance.

Col. i. 19. *It hath pleased the Father that in him all fulness*

Jo. i. 16. *should dwell; that of his fulness we all might*

Heb. iv. receive grace for grace: a fulness of mer-
16. cy to pardon, and grace to help in every
time

Trust in Christ.

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time of need. He that hath conquered the SERM.
enemies of our salvation, who *through death* XV.
hath destroyed him that hath the power of death, Heb. ii.
that is, the devil, must have sufficient power 14.
to *establish the christian, and keep him from* 2 Th. iii.
all evil, and to preserve him unto his heaven- 3.
ly kingdom ; to preserve him safe to the end 2 Tim. iv.
of his faith, even till he obtain the full 18.
and final salvation of the soul.—Here then
is firm ground for the hope and dependance
of the christian on Christ as a Saviour : the
firm assurance that he has, not only of the
credibility of his character, but of his fide-
lity, his endless compassions, and his mighty
power. “ Here then, saith the believing soul,
“ I rest ; I can venture the stress of my soul
“ no where else, but on this Saviour of
“ God’s appointment : but him I can wil-
“ lingly and safely trust ; and in this re-
“ spect, can cast all my care upon him, who
“ hath cared for me, and *remembered me* Pf. cxxxvi.
“ *in my low estate, because his mercy en-* 23.
“ *dureth for ever.* And *this hope and trust*
“ *I have as an anchor to my soul, sure and* Heb. vi.
“ *stedfast, and which entereth within the veil,* 19, 20.
“ *whither Jesus, I know, is already entered*
“ *as a forerunner for us.*”

Thus have I considered the nature of this
trust in Christ, or shown you what is im-
plied in it.

Let

SERM. Let us now,

XV. II. Enquire, what are the special properties of this trust. And

1. It must be regular.

By regular I mean such a trust in Christ, as engages us to perform all those conditions of the covenant of grace, which on our part are necessary to our being interested in Christ as a Saviour: such as sincere *repentance from all dead works*; the *being transformed by the renewing of our minds, so as to approve the holy, good, acceptable, and perfect will of God*, and to show our approbation by an universal steady obedience to it.—

Heb. vi.

1.

Rom. xii.

2.

The requiring such conditions from us was absolutely necessary in the nature of the thing, to fit us for trusting in Christ. He can no otherwise become the proper object of our trust and confidence, than as we are qualified to partake of the blessings he is the great author of.— Now without repentance, a sincere repentance, we are unfit for a pardon, which would be of no real advantage to us; and therefore we can never trust him in a sinful state for pardon. If we are not endeavouring to *cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God*, we can never trust in him for sanctifying grace and influence. And if we are not sanctified, we cannot expect to be justified

2 Cor. vii.

1.

fied by him before God ; because this would SERM.
 be a contradicting his character even in that XV.
 for which we profess to depend upon him, 
 and would represent him not as a Saviour
 from sin, but a Saviour of those who con-
 tinue in it. Thus saith the apostle: *That* Galat. ii.
if while we seek to be justified by Christ, we 17.
ourselves are found sinners, we in effect make
him the minister of sin. And unless we
 are pardoned, and sanctified, and justified
 here, we cannot depend upon him for com-
 plete salvation and redemption at last. For
he becomes the author of eternal salvation only Heb. v. 9.
to them that obey him.

To pretend then to trust in Christ, without
 ever being concerned whether we are duly
 qualified for such a trust, whether we have
 a right to place our dependance on him on
 gospel grounds or not, is no better than bold
 presumption. And yet there are too many,
 who fondly persuade themselves that all the
 grace and mercy of the gospel is certainly
 theirs, being designed for all those who will
 lay hold of it right or wrong ; and thus con-
 fidently imagine they are building on a sure
 foundation, that Christ, remission of sins,
 and eternal salvation are all their own, and
 that all is well with them. But this is a
 confidence and dependance which Christ will
 never own, but reject with detestation ; and
 which

SERM. which will leave them ashamed and eternally disappointed at last.

XV.

2. This trust in Christ must be entire.

It must be placed in him, and in him alone. *As there is salvation in no other name under heaven but his; so no other is to be thought on, or mentioned by us, but his only. No saints departed, no, not the highest angels, are to share this honour with him, of becoming the hope and trust of immortal souls for their salvation and eternal happiness. Nor will any external privileges or advantages be made account of by the true christian. He counts all these things as nothing, as loss and dung in comparison with Christ; and renouncing all confidence in every thing inconsistent with this trust, places the whole of his dependance, in a way of well doing, on Jesus Christ, and on him alone.*

Act. iv. 12

Phil. iii. 8

And then,

3. This trust must be persevering. The christian must continue in it, and be often renewing it by solemn acts of devotion to the end.

In this trust he continues, in opposition to all the attempts of infidelity to shake it. Let the men of pride, and self-sufficiency, despise his confidence, and ridicule his dependance on one that was treated as a malefactor, and died an accursed death, for pardon

don and acceptance and eternal life; as the SERM.
ground of his confidence, is too deeply and XV.
firmly laid for all their subtilty to under-
mine, so will his courage be superior to all
the false efforts of their wit and malice to
make him ashamed of his Saviour before men.

"What though Christ crucified was to the
" *Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks* 1 Cor. i.
" *foolishness*; yet to me he appears *Christ*, 23, 24.
" *the wisdom of God, and the power of God.*
" Upon this rock my faith and hope are
" built; and I dare rest them there, for I am
" persuaded *the gates of hell shall never pre-* Mat. xvi.
" *vail against it.*" 18.

Farther; the christian must persevere in
his regular trust in Christ, notwithstanding
all the trials and difficulties of his way.—
What though afflictions may be his lot?
what though he may suffer much? yet he is
to consider, that he has resigned himself up
to Jesus as the great and good *shepherd of* 1 Pet. ii.
souls; and that all this is but his discipline, 25.
a discipline quite consistent with his kindest
designs, and but one needful way of his an-
swering and fulfilling that trust committed
to him.

Again; he must persevere in his trust
in opposition to all the temptations and
assaults of the wicked one.—He, that tempt-
ed the Lord himself to question whether
he was the Son of God, will be fre-
quently assaulting the servants, and endea-
vouring

SERM. vouring to *sift them as wheat*. But let them

XV. see to it, that by his gracious help, who first
 Lu. xxii. conquered in person, and hath ensured a vic-
 31, 32. tory to all his faithful followers, *their faith*
and trust fail not. Let them remember, that

1 Jo. iv. *stronger is he that is with them, than he*
 4. *which is in the world*. And by humble

and fervent prayer let them have recourse
 to the prevalence of his intercession be-
 fore the throne; and they shall find
 2 Cor. xii. that *his grace is sufficient for them*, against
 9. every messenger and assault of satan, and *his*
strength made perfect in their weakness.

Lastly: This trust in Christ is to continue
 Heb. x. till death, and wax strongest then. *Cast not*
 35. *away your confidence*, saith the apostle, *which*
will have great recompence of reward.

And then there will be the greatest need of
 it. In the near prospect of death all dis-
 guises are taken off, things appear as they
 really are; and the entering on an unchange-
 able eternity is most awful and affecting.
 And then, upon gospel-grounds to be able
 to trust in Christ, and to venture out of one
 world into another in firm unshaken depen-
 dence on him, and with the expiring breath
 to say: *Lord Jesus receive my spirit!* this, as
 it is the last, so is the most noble act of a true
 christian's faith. In such a confidence the
 christian may take his leave of the world,
 and of his friends, in this triumphing lan-
 guage:

Act. vii.
 59.

guage: "Yea, though I walk through the SERM.
 "valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no XV.
 "evil, for he is with me. Still my hope and Pf. xxiii.
 "trust is in him, who though he was dead, is 4.
 "alive again, and lives for evermore, Amen! Rev. i. 18.
 "and hath the keys of the invisible world, and
 "of death. I know that my Redeemer liveth; Job xix.
 "and that, though after my skin worms destroy 25-27.
 "the remainder of my body, yet in my flesh I
 "shall see God: whom mine eyes shall behold,
 "and not another for me; though my reins be
 "first consumed within me."—It was from
 this his lively trust in his Redeemer that our
 apostle found comfort in the prospect of
 a near and even a violent death; as it is
 expressed in these two passages in his last
 epistle to Timothy.—*I suffer*, saith he, for cap. i. 12
 this cause of Christ: *nevertheless I am not a-*
shamed; for I know whom I have believed,
and am persuaded, that he is able to keep that
which I have committed to his care against that
day. And would you know what encour-
 aged his trust in Christ in this near and
 awful prospect? It was his comfortable re-
 flexion on his sincere performance of the
 conditions of the gospel-covenant. See the
 beautiful connexion in that other passage:
I am now ready to be offered up, and the time cap. iv.
of my departure is at hand. I have fought a 6, 7, 8.
good fight, I have finished my course, I have
kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up

SERM. *for me a crown of righteousness, which the*
 XV. *Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that*
day.

Before I close, I would address this one word of encouragement to poor penitent sinners.

Mat. xi.
28,

Are there any here who are *weary and heavy laden* on account of their sins, and desirous, above all things, of a Saviour? and inquiring, with all the fervency of awakened consciences, broken hearts, and contrite spirits: "O what shall I do to be saved?"

Mat. xii.
21.

"Who will deliver me from the wrath to come?" Look to Jesus; he invites you, and says: *Come unto me; I will give you rest.* Remember, this was prophesied of him long ago, that in *his name should the Gentiles trust.* Think of the many in past ages who have fled to him under this character, not only of the Jews, but of the Gentiles too, and have found in him all that they trusted him for: and make him your trust, and venture your salvation with him; and you shall not be ashamed. — O do not despair; for *he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him.*

Heb. vii.
25.

And then, let those who have committed themselves to him in this way, see that they act up to their profession. Let them be regular in their obedience, and continue faithful

Trust in Christ.

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ful to him to their death; then let them be **SERM.**
often renewing their fiducial act, and live **XV.**
upon the comfort of it; and thus wait on
him, in his own way, for his performing
all that belongs to his character in his own
time and manner, and giving them the
crown of life at last: and then they shall
find, that *their labour was not in vain in the*
Lord.

1 Cor. xv.
58.



Z 3

SERMON



SERMON XVI.

Faithfulness to CHRIST,

R. E V. ii. 10. last part.

-----*Be thou faithful unto death, and
I will give thee a crown of life.*

SERM.
XVI.

TH E S E words are part of the message which the exalted Saviour sent by his inspired apostle to the church of Smyrna, one of the seven churches in Asia; and which equally concerned both the minister and people. And it is much to the honour of this church, that this message sent them by him, the Lord of all, *whose eyes are like*
to a flame of fire, who searcheth the reins and hearts, came as a testimony to their fidelity and zeal; as a mark of his approbation, without the mixture of any thing like censure or rebuke

ver. 18.

ver. 23.

buke in it. And the name in which he ad- SERM.
 dressed himself to them was peculiarly suited XVI.
 to the state and circumstances of their church, ~
 and the comfort and encouragement he de-
 signed to administer unto them. As I think
 it is well worth our observing, that in the
 epistles to each of these churches, the cha-
 racter under which our exalted Lord repre-
 sents himself appears most exactly suited to
 their particular states; to alarm, quicken,
 comfort, encourage or terrify, as the con-
 dition of each required.

The epistle, of which my text is a part,
 begins thus: *To the angel, or bishop or pastor*
of the church in Smyrna write: These things ver. 8.
saith the first and the last, which was dead
and is alive.—Now as the design of the
 ascended Lord, in his message to this church,
 was to comfort and encourage them under
 the persecutions and sufferings they were to
 meet with for righteousness sake, and to en-
 gage them to constant persevering fidelity to
 the cause of Christ; what more proper cha-
 racter could he wear, than that which he
 chose here, when styling himself *the first and*
the last, which was dead and is alive? q. d.

“ This message comes from that kind and
 “ compassionate Saviour, who was before Col. i. 17.
 “ all things, and of whose kingdom there Lu. i. 33.
 “ shall be no end; who by his own obedience

- SERM. " to sufferings and death hath shown how
 XVI. " the best beloved of God may be afflicted
 " in this life, and how they ought to behave
 " under such afflictions ; and who, by his
 " resurrection from the dead, and exaltation
 " at the right hand of God to an immortal
 " life of glory and happiness, after having
 " obtained eternal redemption for us, gives
 " the greatest encouragement to all those
 " who shall be partakers with him in the
 " fellowship of his sufferings, to believe that
 " they also shall be raised from the dead,
 " after their cruel persecutors had done
 " their worst, and be made partakers with
 " him in his kingdom and glory too." *I*
 ver. 9. *know thy works*, saith he : " I have seen
 " and approved thy conduct and behaviour :
 " I know, or have been a witness also to
 " *thy tribulation, and thy poverty* ; and have
 " observed, that though as to the things of
 " this world thou art greatly reduced, yet
 " *thou art rich* in good works, high in the fa-
 " vour of God, and abounding in the hopes
 " of true religion." *And I know the blas-*
 phemy of those which say they are Jews, but are
 not, but, instead of being members of a true
 ver. 10. church, are of the synagogue of Satan. Fear
 none of those things which thou shalt suffer :
 behold the devil, by his instruments the hea-
 then rulers and magistrates, shall cast some
 of

of them into prison; and ye shall have tribulation ten days, or for a short time; but be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. SERM. XVI.

It is this last clause of the epistle that I have chosen for the subject of a practical discourse: as it contains a solemn charge, equally useful to us, as to those to whom it was at first delivered; and it comes with equal force on ministers and people still. Let us then be fixed in our attention, and imagine that we hear the exalted Saviour speaking from his throne of glory to us in this worshipping assembly, in this age of infidelity, lukewarmness, and apostasy, and saying: *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*—He that hath an ear, so he adds, let him hear what the spirit thus saith to the churches. ver. 11.

In the words there are these two things to be distinctly considered.

I. The charge itself, or the duty required of us. It is nothing less than persevering constancy and fidelity: *Be thou faithful unto death.* And then,

II. The glorious promise, by which we are encouraged to comply with it: *I will give thee a crown of life.*

I. Let

SERM.

XVI.

I. Let us attend to the charge itself, and consider the duty which it requires. It is nothing less than this ; a constant prevailing fidelity to Christ to the end of life, even so far as voluntarily to yield to the severest persecutions, to bonds, imprisonments, and the most cruel death rather than deny him, or prove false to his cause and interest : *Be thou faithful unto death.*

We may consider Jesus, who here thus calls on us, either as our Master and Lord, to whom we are devoted as his servants ; or more properly still as the great *captain of our salvation* : the mighty general, under whose banner we are professed and avowed voluntiers, to follow him whithersoever he leads us, to *quit ourselves like men and be strong*, and to obey his discipline in the whole of it without the least reluctance ; and never to drop the weapons of our warfare, till that warfare is accomplished, either by a regular attendance in the post of common service to the end of life in a natural way, or else by bravely dying in the field of battle ; *not counting our lives dear unto ourselves, so that we may finish our course with joy.*—And how powerfully animating a thought to engage us to wax valiant to the end, to consider Jesus here as *the captain of our salvation, made perfect*, or consecrated

to

to that work, *through* his own *sufferings*? SERM. XVI.
He having already got the victory over all our enemies, even over death itself, and him that had the power of it, is most grandly qualified to lead us on through conflicts and the sorest trials, to victories, and everlasting triumphs.

A charge like this then necessarily supposes, that there is great danger of our being drawn aside, and becoming unfaithful : and that this danger is not over after the best beginnings, and most eager fervent zeal hitherto shown in the service of Christ ; even though persons should already have suffered some things, such as *tribulations* and *poverty* too : nay, and that this danger will continue, in some degree, during the whole of this state of trial, and not be over till that shall end, and the reward be secure and in actual possession. And yet we are to *be faithful*, and that *to death* itself ; so it is here charged on us.

We may take in the whole of what is intended in this charge under the following particulars.

1. It is supposed, that there hath been, as the foundation of all, a hearty resolution for Christ, and a serious surrender of ourselves to him and his service.

It

SERM.

XVI.

Eph. ii.
20.

It supposes, that we are no strangers to his discoveries, his offers, and his claims : but that, on the contrary, we have known and professedly received the one, and chearfully submitted to the other. And to this end, that we have endeavoured to know and understand his gospel, as the rule and foundation of our faith. That we have built, not on the inventions and schemes, and divers doctrines of men, but *on the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.* That, as it is judiciously expressed, “ we have conscientiously endeavoured by frequent and diligent searches into the word of God, to learn from thence what God would have us believe and practise : that our faith is not taken upon trust ; but that we can appeal to God, that we have endeavoured to form it from the bible, without allowed prepossessions, in the faithful use of the best means in our power to understand the mind of God, and with fervent prayer to the Father of lights for light and guidance.”

Such a surrender on such a principle is absolutely necessary to the very being of a true christian ; and it is the leading step in the christian life. Without such a foundation the building will never rise ; and without such a dedication and resolution there

Faithfulness to Christ.

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there can be no proper hold for obedience SERM.
and fidelity at all. XVI.

2. This fidelity implies, that we *hold fast* Heb. x. 23.
the profession of our faith without wavering.

That as far as we are convinced of the truth of christianity, and understand from the scriptures what are the real and peculiar doctrines of it, we adhere to them, and never warp from them. That, in opposition to gain-sayers, to the *cunning craftiness of* Eph. iv. 14.
them that lie in wait to deceive, and to those who grow cold and indifferent to the christian scheme, and are easily inclinable to return back to mere natural religion, to forsake the full blaze of the sun of righteousness for a light dimly shining in a dark place; that in opposition to these, as well as to those who hold doctrines contrary to the purity of the gospel, we are established in the truth, and maintain our strict adherence to *the truth* Eph. iv. 21.
as it is in Jesus.

This was peculiarly, and in a most eminent manner, that fidelity or faithfulness, which our exalted Saviour required of the churches in Asia: as we find it opposed to those false doctrines, and corrupt mixtures with the true doctrines of christianity, which are specified in some of these messages to the churches, which were yet abominable to Christ, and which he declared *he hated*; as well as to that *lukewarmness* ver. 6, 15.

SERM.

XVI.

V. c. iii.

15.

Mat. xiii.

21.

1 Tim. i.

19.

Mat. x.

33.

warmness and indifference where the truth was professedly maintained, which is a state wherein christians were incapable of any improvement, and also were an easy prey to the snares of satan and his instruments, to draw them off from their profession; as it would quite unfit them for trials and sufferings on the account of Christ and his gospel. *When persecutions, nay and lesser difficulties, arise for the sake of Christ and his religion, by and by they will be offended;* and, rather than keep the faith, will, without much difficulty, be tempted to *make shipwreck both of faith and of a good conscience* too. In opposition to both these; instead of suffering ourselves to be ridiculed out of our principles, and becoming ashamed of our Master, and unwilling to assert his cause, we must dare to own him, speak for him, vindicate his honour, and adhere to his interest, however singular we may appear. Nor must our zeal abate, but continue in its regular and lively exercise; dreading ever to betray our trust, or expose our Master to the contempt and scorn of his enemies, much more to *deny him before men.*

And then,

3. This fidelity to Christ implies our continuance in the persevering practice of all that his religion requires.

Christi-

Faithfulness to Christ.

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Christianity is a practical thing: all the great truths which it discovers are designed to influence our practice, to make us better, and so fit us for heaven. It is not then enough to *call Christ Lord, Lord*; but as ever we would approve our fidelity to him, *we must do the things which he saith*. His word is to be our constant rule; his commands and authority to bind and enforce our obedience; and his example to animate and enliven us. Wherever we see his image and superscription, we are to pay an unre-served submission; wherever we observe his orders, we are to comply without the least reluctance, and with the greatest readiness. We must never *hold the truth in un-righteousness*; never content ourselves with *professing to know Christ, and yet in works deny him*; but as we name his name, and acknowledge him to be our only rightful Lord, so we are to *depart from all iniquity*. All our knowledge of him, and our growing acquaintance with the truths of his religion, and the excellence of his divine doctrine, must be ever made subservient to the influencing our hearts, and the directing our lives and conversations. *The life we live in the flesh, we are thus to live by the faith of the Son of God*.

Faithfulness to Christ then requires, that we not only avoid every thing which we know

SERM.

XVI.

Lu. vi. 46.

Rom. i.

Tit. i. 16.

2 Tim. ii.

19.

Gal. ii.

20.

SERM. know to be contrary to our holy profession;
 XVI. and that we are sure is displeasing to him;
 but that we aim at doing that which shall
 render us well-pleasing and acceptable in
 his sight. That we continue in the exer-
 cise of meekness, temperance, patience, godli-
 ness, brotherly kindness, and charity, and
 show our love to God and Christ by having
 an unfeigned respect to all their command-
 ments. That instead of being moved from
 our duty by the pleasures and temptations
 of the world, we remain steady in the per-
 formance of it, though it cost us some la-
 bour and self-denial; and though our obe-
 dience to it should stand opposite to our in-
 terest and advantage in this life.

It is farther implied, that we become
 more strengthened and confirmed in the ha-
 bits of holiness; that we are hardened and
 inured to the service of Christ; and so more
 proof against temptations. That we are
 still encreasing our spiritual vigour, and be-
 come more able to stand against the force
 and power of the adversary. That we are
 improving in the graces and virtues of the
 divine life, and instead of growing careless
 and irregular in our behaviour, we are more
 eminently watchful and circumspect. That
 forgetting the things which are behind, and
 reaching forth to those things which are before,
 we press towards the mark for the prize of the
 high

2 Pet. i. 6.
 7.
 Pl. cxix.
 6.
 Phil. iii.
 13, 14.

high calling of God in Christ Jesus; that, SERM. instead of drawing back unto perdition by XVI. forsaking the holy commandment delivered unto us, and by suffering ourselves to be led aside Heb. x. and again entangled by the pollutions of 2 Pet. ii. the world, after we have formerly escaped 20. them we cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness 1. in the fear of God; and thus continue believing, till we receive the end of our faith, even 1 Pet. i. 9. the salvation of our souls.

And this our fidelity (so it is here expressly required) must continue *to death*. Our state of trial is to continue as long as our lives; it will end with them, and not before. And as Jesus, the captain of our salvation, has appointed and fixed each of us in our stations, so we are to abide during his pleasure, to remain in our posts, and never forsake our standard, or put off the harness, or resign the weapons of our warfare, till he thinks fit to send the summons, and order our dismissal.

We are thus to *be faithful unto death*: i. e. (as I before observed) we are to submit to a violent death rather than prove false to Christ; to become martyrs for him, rather than traytors to him; and resolve, by his grace, to *die with him rather than deny him*. Mat. xxvi. 35.

A a

Should

SERM. Should we be called to *resist even unto*
 XVI. *blood striving against sin*, we still must hold
 on resisting, and seal the truth with our
 Heb. xii. blood, rather than not witness for Christ;
 4. considering we are the servants and follow-
 Rev. i. 5. *ers of him who was himself the faithful*
 Heb. xii. *and true witness*, and who *endured the cross,*
 2. *despising the shame.*—At present, blessed be
 God, we have no apprehensions of such
 sufferings, such awful and severe trials of
 our faithfulness to Christ. But it is a possi-
 ble case, and many christians in every
 age have been thus tried; and it is expect-
 ed therefore, that we reckon on such things,
 Lu. xiv. that in our *counting the cost*, at our solemn
 28. entrance on a christian life, we take this also
 into the account, as what God, if he thinks
 proper, may in the course of his provi-
 dence permit to overtake us; and thus be-
 come martyrs in resolution. And to this pur-
 pose, as ever we would abide firm in such
 a season, and have the *trial of our faith* then
 1 Pet. i. 7. *found more precious than that of gold which*
perisheth when tried in the fire, even unto
praise, and honour, and glory, at the appear-
ance of Christ; we must make it our con-
 Gal. 24. stant practice to be dying to the world, to
crucify our flesh with the affections and lusts
thereof.

And if we are thus to show our fidelity
 to Christ by submitting to the most violent
 perse-

persecutions and even painful death, rather than prove false to him; much more justly may we conclude, where we are excused such severe trials, that we are to abide *faithful to death* in our common service. SERM. XVI.

And the reason is plain, because this is the only proper test, and full proof of our fidelity. We may set out well at first; we may have long continued in the profession of the gospel, and have *tasted the good word of God*, and felt something of the powers of *the world to come*: and yet the scripture respects it as a possible thing, we *may fall away*, so as to *have our latter end worse than our beginning*: and after having escaped some temptations, and stood our ground for a considerable time, be at last overcome and lose all. Our spiritual enemies will continue warring against us all our lives; and we shall never be quite out of danger, till we have shot the gulph, and have finished well. How long this time of our warfare will last, we cannot tell. With some the end appears nearer at hand, in the course of nature, and with others at a greater distance; but this is uncertain. Our great Lord and exalted Leader may shorten the time whenever he pleases; and from an early combat remove the christian to his reward. But if he makes the period of service, and the

SERM. season for our trial long, and attended with

XVI. peculiar difficulties, we are not to murmur

in our post, nor to grow weary of our sta-

tion; but still *all the days of our appointed*

time to wait till our change comes; solli-

citous above all things to be then found

so labouring as to be accepted of Christ. For

then, and then only, *shall we have confidence,*

and not be ashamed before him at his appear-

ing.--Thus was it with the Master himself;

and thus was it with St. Paul, that blessed

faithful servant of the best of Masters. Hear

how he expresses himself at the close of life,

in prospect of his violent death just at hand.

I am now, saith he, ready to be offered up, and

the time of my departure is at hand. I have

fought a good fight, I have finished my course,

I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid

up for me a crown of righteousness, which the

Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at

that day; and not to me only, but unto all

them also that love his appearing.

And this brings me to the next general head of discourse: viz.

II. To consider the glorious encouragement which my text holds out to us, to be thus *faithful unto death*. It is nothing less than this promise: *I will give thee a crown of life.*

In

In order to know and feel all the mighty force of this divine encouragement, let us attend a little both to the reward itself, and the person who here promises to bestow it. SERM. XVI.

1. Let us consider the reward itself, which is here promised to the christian who shall be found faithful unto death; it is nothing less than *a crown of life*.

In the text I cited before it is called *a crown of righteousness*. "Either pointing," as is observed, "to the way in which God hath provided for conferring it, in consistence with his own honour, on penitent sinners; in virtue of the propitiation of Christ God is just, when he is the justifier of them that believe in Jesus, and he is so when he glorifies them too: or intimating it to be a reward of the sincere, though imperfect righteousness of his servants and followers; a reward due by his promise, though not by their desert."—In the text it is stiled *a crown of life*; and it is so stiled in another place: *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.* Rom. iii. 26. James i. 12.

The reward is here promised under the representation of *a crown*; the recompense of a kingly honour; which is the grandest idea of mortal honour and glory, and happiness:

SERM. Nor can mortal ambition ever aspire higher than to a crown. — In the present case

XVI.

the representation appears more beautiful as well as just, because the christian himself is represented as a warrior: and as it was the custom of old to bestow crowns on returning triumphing conquerors, so he is promised that the reward of his fidelity, and maintaining it to death, shall be a crown; the bestowment of which supposes some grand solemnity, and most august triumph. And all the happiness and glory that can be imagined in the possession of the most radiant crown, and the most opulent kingdom, is but a faint shadow of the happiness which the faithful christian shall be rewarded with after death. Though no doubt the crown of a martyr shall be unspeakably more brilliant and weighty than that of a common christian. For as *one star differs from another star in glory, so shall it be in the resurrection of the dead.*

1 Cor. xv.
42.

And then, that which is the distinguishing property and peculiar recommendation of this crown in my text is, that it is a *crown of life*, or a living lively crown. The crowns with which the antient generals were adorned were made of very frail and perishable materials. Their laurels and flowers faded before they had well enjoyed them. A proper emblem of their transient glory,
and

and a plain intimation of the short continu- SERM.
ance of their tranquillity! Their joys were XVI.
joys of temporary conquest, not of everlast-
ing rest. But, let the christian be *faithful*

unto death, and he shall receive a *crown of life*. A crown which shall be bestowed on him after he has done with this mortal life, in a state of incorruption and immortality: and what can that be, but suitable to that happy state? And therefore, a crown, the glories of which shall never fade or tarnish.

Then, in the best sense, the christian's *glory* Job xxix.
shall always be fresh in him, and his crown ^{20.}

of life shall communicate, as it were, increasing vigour the longer he wears it! — *A crown of life!* — When earthly honours cease, when monarchies and kingdoms are broken up, when all other crowns and scepters shall be cast aside as neglected things, then the christian has a crown which shall live and flourish and adorn his head, and be at once the strength and glory of all his happiness.

This is the reward: But as yet *eye hath* 1 Cor. ii.
not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered 9.
into the heart of man to conceive the greatness of it, and therefore no mortal language or eloquence can describe it.

But to proceed,

II. Let us farther consider the person who will bestow this reward; whose hand

SERM. it is from whom we shall receive this crown
XVI. of life, this glorious reward itself.

I will give thee a crown of life.—Whose words are these? Even the words of Jesus the exalted Saviour.—And they intimate at once, the certainty and security of the reward, and also the peculiar pleasure which the christian will feel in the receiving it from him.

That HE hath promised this crown of life is the most certain security of the reward.—*I will give it thee.*—And who is he that saith this? Who is it that has such large and illustrious rewards to bestow, and thus grandly assures us, that he will certainly give them?—"Look, O my soul, through
" this region of sin and sorrows, of darkness
" and death, upwards to the world of light.
" Let thy faith bear thee on her towering
" wings to the third heaven, the palace of the
" eternal King: and there behold, in the
" midst of the throne, one in the form of
" the Son of man arrayed in dazzling splen-
" dour, outshining the sun in the firma-
" ment, and reigning as the King of kings,
" and Lord of lords; to whom is given do-
" minion and a kingdom; his kingdom is an
" everlasting kingdom, and his dominion that
" which shall never pass away: and then
" think, it is he that has promised this
" crown to thee!"—"But why am I se-
" cure

Rev. xix.
16.

Dan. vii.

14.

"cure in his promise?" may the humble christian say: "His power, no doubt, is equal to the accomplishment of such a promise: but what reason have I to expect the display of it to me, and for my sake? What am I to him?" I answer: infinitely dear to him; as he is the kind Saviour, who undertook thy recovery from hell to salvation, and by whom it is that thou art put into this state of trial, that thou mayst obtain this reward as thy own.

Think of him especially in the character under which he here claims our attentive regard. Consider him as *the first, before all things, and by whom all things consist*; and as *the last*, who shall out-live all the kings of this world, and the glory of them, and reign for ever: as him therefore, who had originally a principle of immortal life in himself, and can communicate it at pleasure; and he will never lose his power of continuing and supporting that life, or of controuling, at his will, all the powers of earth and hell.

Consider him yet farther in the other part of his character, as *Him who was dead and is alive* again; and this will more abundantly confirm your hope, and ascertain the security of this reward.—For it is his purchase who here promises it; and purchased by nothing less

SERM.
XVI.

ver. 8.

Ibid.

SERM. less than his own death and sufferings. *He*

XVI. *that was dead* says; *I will give it you*; and

you may well depend on his word, since he died with this view, and for this very reason, that he might make you this comfortable promise. His right to bestow it is equal to his power: it is founded in his blood, and was a part of his own reward for his voluntary humiliation and death. On this ac-

Jo. xvii. 2. count is it that *he has power to give eternal life* to as many as sincerely believe in him.

And for a proof of the validity of his purchase, and the greater certainty of his bestowing this reward, *He who once was dead is now alive.*

His resurrection from the dead was the most convincing proof of the acceptableness of his undertaking; that he was really that grand and illustrious person he declared himself to be; and at the same time of his being invested with the power of bestowing this happiness on whomsoever he will. His living again was not only for his own sake, but for theirs also who shall appear his faithful servants to death; and as he died and rose again, and revived for them, so

Jo. xiv.
19.

because he lives, they may be assured that *they shall live also*. His living again is the pledge and earnest of their future immortal life and happiness; and therefore his word of promise is their fullest security. For
though

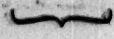
though heaven and earth may pass away, yet SERM.
his word and his faithfulness shall never fail. XVI.

And then lastly, consider the peculiar
pleasure which the faithful christian will Mat.
feel when he shall receive this crown of xxiv. 35.
life from his hand.—Such a reward, so in-

finitely and gloriously disproportionate to the
imperfect poor broken service of a short
life here, must fill with joy unspeakable
from whatever hand it came. But still to
receive it from his hand; from him who
though he originally was *before all things*, Phil. ii. 7.
yet left his glory, *humiliated himself to be found*⁸.

*in fashion of a man, to take on him the form
of a servant, and to become obedient to death,
even the death of the cross, and to die an ac-
curSED death, that he might purchase this
bestowment of happiness upon you and me!*
What strange and surprizing emotions will
this thought raise within us? To receive a
crown of life from one that died, and died
not for his own sake but for ours! A crown
of glory from him, who, to procure it, wore
a crown of thorns, was buffeted, spit on,
and endured cruel mockings and scourging;
and all the contradiction of sinners against
himself; and from that hand which was
pierced with nails, and fastened to the ac-
curSED tree! To hear him now say: *I will
give it thee*; O how should it endear him
and his service to us, as well as encourage

SERM. us to be *fervent in spirit serving such a*
 XVI. Lord? And when we by faith look through
 Rom. xii. the vail, and behold his hand holding out
 11. this crown to us; how should it sparkle in our
 eyes, and with what unfainting zeal should
 we press forward towards it?—But to take
 it at last from that hand, and put it on in
 Rev. iii. his immediate presence, and *sit down with*
 21. *him on his throne, as he has already overcome,*
and is sat down with the Father on his throne;
 O the unspeakable transports of love and joy
 that will then overcome our souls!—Each of
 us vanquished with his mighty love shall with
 wonder and surprize cast ourselves, and our
 crowns too which we receive from his
 blessed hand, at his feet, and say: “ O dear
 “ and adored Saviour! And was this the end
 “ of thy undertaking, and the design of
 “ thy love and grace? Was it for this, that
 “ thou didst leave thy original heaven, and
 “ the glory of the Father to dwell in yonder
 “ apostate world of ours? Was it for this
 “ that thou didst deign to put on mortal
 “ flesh, to become an infant of days, lead
 “ a life of sorrow, poverty, meanness and
 “ distress, amidst thine own creatures? Was
 “ it for this, that thou didst become a man
 Isa. liii. 3. “ of sorrows, and acquainted with grief?
 “ Was it for this, that thou didst suffer thy-
 “ self to be insulted, abused, denied, be-
 “ trayed; and didst weep, and pray, and
 “ ascend

“ ascend the cross, and bleed, and groan, SERM.
 “ and die? Was it for this, not so much for XVI.
 “ thy sake, but mine, a wretch, a rebel; 
 “ that with that hand thou mightest bestow
 “ a crown of life on me? And dost thou live
 “ to bestow it? And am I made alive by
 “ thee to receive it in this glorious man-
 “ ner? Lord! who, or what am I? for
 “ what is it I am thus honoured, thus re-
 “ warded? Is all this for my poor imper-
 “ fect service on earth? *Had I done all that* Lu. xvii.
 “ *was commanded me, I were but an unprofi-* 10.
 “ *table servant*; but when I have been so
 “ very defective that my best performances
 “ needed a mediator, am I to be thus dealt
 “ with as if I had been a sinless angel? Is
 “ this crown of life for me? and do I re-
 “ ceive it at thine hand? O blessed Saviour!
 “ I am overcome with wonder and love.
 “ Not unto me, but to thee be the praise
 “ and thanksgiving! Behold I bow at thy
 “ feet, and adore the riches of overflowing
 “ grace!” — “ *Worthy is the Lamb that was* Rev. v. 9,
 “ *slain, and has redeemed us to God by his* 12, 13.
 “ *blood, to receive blessing, and honour, and*
 “ *glory, and riches, and strength! Blessing*
 “ *therefore, and honour, and glory, and power,*
 “ *be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and*
 “ *unto the Lamb for ever!*”

And

SERM. And now, for a close: my friends, what

XVI. hearts must we have, if this consideration
 doth not move us, and engage us to be sted-

1 Cor. xv. *fast, unmoveable, always abounding in the*
 5, 8. *work of the Lord; for as much as we know that*

our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord!

What can allure, what can captivate us, if
 a crown of immortal life will not? Ah,
 shall we be cold or lukewarm in the service
 of the best of Masters? Let us recollect our-
 selves, and exert all our powers in his ser-

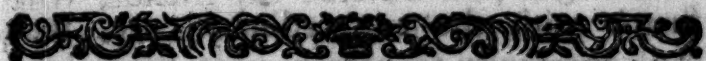
Rev. iii. 2. *vice: and let us strengthen the things which*
remain and are ready to die.

Under this view in particular let us con-
 sider every sacramental attendance, as a repe-
 tition of our military oath to our great ge-
 neral, as a renewal of our vows, that we will
be faithful to him to death: and carefully let us
 see to it that we afterwards act a consistent
 part, never turning aside; as knowing that
 at the longest our time of trial is but short:

Heb. x. *Yet in a little while, and he that shall come will*
 37. *come, and will not tarry; and behold! his re-*

Isa. xl. 10. *ward is with him, and his work before him.*

Rev. iii. *Hold fast therefore that which thou hast, that*
 11. *no man take thy crown.*



SERMON XVII.

The character of Christ's disciples.

ACTS iv. 13. latter part.

*And they took knowledge of them,
that they had been with Jesus.*

THE persons on whom this remark SERM.
was made were the two apostles, Pe- XVII.
ter and John: and the immediate occasion
of it we may read from the beginning of the
third chapter.

We find there, that these apostles had
wrought a very surprizing miracle upon a
man that was a cripple from his birth; by cap. iii.
restoring him, at once, to the perfect use of ver. 2—
his limbs, and to health and soundness in 10.
the presence of all the people.—Peter, upon
this occasion, while the multitude were
crowding

SERM. crowding about him and John, and were
XVII. struck with the extraordinary cure, took

the opportunity to preach unto them Jesus
as the Messiah; and assure them that it
was through faith in his name, whom they had
denied and killed, that this impotent man
was made strong. — Such a discourse as this,

cap. iii.

ver. 16.

cap. v. 31.

cap. iv. 7.

ver. 8—

10.

ver. 13.

so close and pungent, and backed with so
notable a miracle, while it brought some of
these sinners to repentance, and to seek for
pardon from him who was exalted to be a
prince and a Saviour, even to those who had
crucified him, only enraged the chief priests
and sadducees so much the more against the
apostles. The effect of which was, that they
were brought before the high priest and coun-
cil; and were asked by them, *by what power,*
or by what name they had performed this cure.
— Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, told
them, that it was by the name of Jesus Christ
of Nazareth, whom they had crucified, and God
had raised from the dead. And thereupon with
dauntless courage, he goes on to assert his
Master's cause; and pleads it with a force and
wisdom which all their adversaries were not
able to gainsay or resist. Now when they (i. e.
the high priest and council) perceived the bold-
ness of Peter and John, and knew that they were
unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled;
and they took knowledge of them, that they had
been with Jesus.

Before

Before I proceed, I cannot help taking SERM. notice here of the mighty difference between XVII. the temper and conduct of Peter now, and a little before his Master's crucifixion and death.—*Then*, when in the judgment-hall only a *poor servant maid* took knowledge of him that he had been with Jesus, his fear ran so high that he denied it, saying: *I know* Mat. xxvi. 69; &c. *not what thou sayest.* And when others taxed him still more closely with having been with Jesus of Galilee, he persisted in his denial, and began to curse and to swear; discovering thus a temper and language as unlike a disciple of Christ as possible.—But now, behold the same man forward to own his Master, bold to assert his being the true Messiah, and own himself his disciple, before not a servant, but the *chief priests and rulers of the Jews* themselves; and daring to charge them with having rejected their own Messiah, and thus fulfilled, in the worst manner, the predictions of their own prophets.—How does Peter here give evident proof of the sincerity of his repentance for having denied his Lord, and of his full persuasion of the truth of his resurrection? How are all the former prejudices of a mind, on the whole, upright and sincere happily removed by the force of divine truth!



But my farther design from the words is
I. To inquire, what may be couched
under this remark of the sacred histo-
rian.

And then,

II. To make some suitable observations
and reflexions upon it.

I. Let us consider a little particularly,
what we may suppose implied in, or couch-
ed under, this remark of the sacred histo-
rian: that the Jewish *high priest and coun-
cil took knowledge of these apostles, that they
had been with Jesus.*

It is certainly here supposed, that their
knowing and recollecting Peter and John
under this character of disciples of Jesus,
had in it, at this time, something peculiarly
striking.—And if we attend, we may, per-
haps, observe the following things to be
couched under the remark.

1. It is evident, that under this character
of the followers of Jesus, the high priest
and council of the Jews, esteemed these a-
postles as private and uneducated persons;
and therefore unlikely to have used any
feint or artifice with respect to the cure
wrought on the lame man.

This is particularly expressed in the for-
mer part of this verse: *They perceived that
they were unlearned and ignorant men, per-
sons*

sons of a low education. Such were the SERM.
followers of Jesus in general: not the cele- XVII.
brated rabbies and learned expounders of
the law; but persons of inferior life, though
of better dispositions. It was but a few
weeks before that they were seen among
the poor humble disciples of a despised Je-
sus of Nazareth: though now they are
heard to talk with an extraordinary force and
energy, to expound and apply the scriptures
with the greatest clearness and perspicuity,
equal, nay superior in judgment to their
most celebrated doctors; and, besides, they
are seen to raise up a cripple that was never
able to stand in all his life before, and make
him immediately whole and sound, and to
walk in full strength and vigour in the pre-
sence of the multitude.

Surely such a discourse, from such per-
sons, grounded on such a miracle, was
enough to convince their enemies that there
must have been something very uncommon
and extraordinary in these men; that what
they said was vastly above persons in their
stations of life, and what they did beyond the
power of the most skilful artists. And con-
sequently, that as they declared they wrought
this cure *in the name of Jesus*, so they did
not make use of their Master's name as a
charm, but as declaring from whose virtue

SERM. and efficacy this salvation was really obtained.
XVII.

2. *Their taking knowledge of these apostles that they had been with Jesus*, seems also to intimate, that they recollected the claims and pretensions of their Master, and the works that he had done.

To these they could not have been utter strangers during the life of Jesus upon earth. They had some of them been witnesses to his extraordinary works, and asked him the same question which here they put to his disciples. *The chief priests and elders came to him, and asked him, saying: By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?* When, therefore, they now beheld the courage and the wondrous work of Peter and John, and remembered that they were disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, they could hardly avoid recollecting their Master too. And when they knew these disciples to be unlearned, and yet saw the change in them, and heard them own that it was in the name and by power derived from their Master that they were enabled to speak and work in so extraordinary a manner; they had sufficient reason to conclude, that if these apostles did receive their powers from Jesus, he must have been a much more considerable person than any
of

Mat. xxi.
23.

The character of Christ's disciples. 373

of their teachers, and at least very like an SERM.
extraordinary teacher sent from God. XVII.

And so strong indeed was the force of this evidence, that we find, though it did not engage them to become his disciples too, yet it silenced their cavils. For, saith the sacred historian, after they had observed this extraordinary boldness of Peter and John, *they marvelled; and beholding the man that was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.* ver. 14. Nay, they themselves confess the truth of the miracle, and are at a loss how to act in the affair. For when they had commanded the apostles to be put out, *they conferred amongst themselves, saying: What shall we do with these men?* ver. 15; *For that indeed a notable miracle has been done by them is manifest to all that dwell at Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it.* 16.

Hereupon I observe, as a farther thing intimated in this remark,

3. That the manner in which these disciples showed themselves on this occasion to have been with Jesus, was such as tended very much to the credit of their Master, as well as to their own reputation and honour.

They took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. And what made them recollect this particular circumstance? Why, their firm attachment to Jesus, though de-

SERM. spised; their daring to avow his cause; their
 XVII. constancy and resolution in it; their gene-
 ~~~~~ rous self-denial; their holy heavenly lives  
 and conversations; and their abounding zeal  
 in the service of their Lord and Master.

How much was such a conduct as this suited to recommend Jesus and his cause? How much was this their behaviour to the credit of their Master? — It now appeared that all his disciples did not treat him like Judas. However, through a sudden surprize and fear they forsook him for a little time, yet they soon recovered themselves; and even Peter, who went farther than the others of them, (and though he staid with Christ to see the end, only exposed himself the more by his sad denial of him) yet now he is most forward in owning and glorying in him. — All this must certainly have a proper tendency to convince even enemies, that these disciples were fully persuaded of their Master's mission; and that they had found him answering all his pretensions, as well as a wise and kind, and gracious Lord: and that they had their chief hopes and expectations for a blessed eternity, in and through Jesus alone.

And then this conduct of the apostles must turn out no less to the interest and advantage of the religion of Jesus too. — To behold men of like passions with others, and  
 those

those poor illiterate persons too, silencing their  
most learned and artful opposers, conquering  
their own fears, and divesting themselves of every  
mean and selfish and carnal view, in order  
to raise their own minds, and those of  
their fellow-creatures to things spiritual and  
heavenly; to hear them recommending their  
Master and his cause, with only such a view:  
what an effect was such a temper and behav-  
iour suited to have on all thinking and honest  
minds? And what a great and lovely idea was  
it suited to give mankind of a religion, which  
could thus change, refine, and elevate the  
spirits of men, and enable them to live and  
act so much above the common rate?—  
Certainly it must put every serious and  
thoughtful mind upon the inquiry: “What  
“ is this christianity? It must certainly be  
“ peculiarly excellent in itself, since it is so  
“ extraordinary in its fruits. These chris-  
“ tians are indeed a people generally spoken  
“ against: and yet they have more to say  
“ for themselves, than their most learned  
“ accusers can find to say against them;  
“ they have a courage and resolution, which  
“ their most powerful enemies cannot shake,  
“ and their lives are made up of virtue and  
“ goodness.— Surely such men as these are  
“ *more excellent than their neighbours*; and  
“ their distinguishing excellence must pro-

SERM.

XVII.

Prov. xii.

28.



SERM. "ceed from the influence of their religion  
 XVII. "upon them. That religion, therefore,  
 "must be something well worthy our at-  
 "tention and regard."

And then all this tended also very much to the honour of the disciples themselves; that they should discover, in such a manner, whose servants they were. — If there is any virtue in, or praise due to, that which is really and truly good, excellent, and amiable; then certainly these blessed apostles of the most blessed Master were the noblest and most excellent characters. As they were not ashamed of their Master, they were no reproach and scandal to him; but discovered themselves to be his honour and his glory.

But I shall now proceed to the next general head of discourse, viz.

II. To make some observations and reflexions from this passage of scripture, which may be suitable to our own circumstances.

I. We may, I think, conclude from what has been already said, that true christianity is in itself a most excellent thing; and that a sincere consistent disciple of Christ is a most great and exalted character.

Were there ever any mortal man superior in dignity and true worth and excellence to the first disciples and apostles of our Lord

Lord Jesus? Did ever so much goodness, SERM.  
so much light, and life, and love, and so XVII.  
much of heaven unite in this world of ours  
before, except in their divine Master?

What is true greatness? Wherein does it consist? Not in pomp and show; not in a crowd of mean slavish dependants, nor in a haughty distance from fellow mortals: but in subduing unruly passions, in being properly conscious to the dignity of human nature, and living agreeably to such a consciousness. — And what is true courage? Why, if we will be decided by the judgment of Solomon, it consists in subduing and *ruling our* Prov. xvi.  
*own spirits*, which is a more difficult and no- 32.  
ble victory than *the taking a city*. True courage does not consist in a vain exertion of bodily strength, in tyrannical insults and oppressions; much less in subduing the reflexions of reason and conscience, and defying the eternal God: but in the true reverential fear of God, and of nothing else in opposition to him. — Behold then in these disciples of Jesus, the men of true courage! Behold the greatness of their spirits, when, rather than not speak in their Master's name and cause, they despised the insults and threatnings of their most powerful enemies!

The right working of this excellent temper in a holy fear of God, and of nothing  
besides

SERM. besides him, is finely exemplified in the following part of this chapter. After Peter and John had been called in, and charged by the sanhedrin *not to speak any more, nor to teach at all in the name of Jesus*: instead of going away silent, lest that silence should be interpreted a false submission, *they answered and said: Whether it be lawful and right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things, which we have seen and heard.* — So, saith the historian, *when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them.*—And the next thing we hear of them is, *that they went to their own company, and reported what had befallen them*; and, instead of restraining prayer through fear of their enemies, joined all together in fervent prayer to God, and in the most lively acts of devotion.—Behold the men! --- Here confounding their accusers and their judge too; there prostrate in humble worship, adoration, and thanksgiving!—And there is one expression in their prayer itself, which seems to intimate their triumph in that despised cause of Jesus their Master. *And now, Lord, behold their threatnings, and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.*

ver. 18,  
19, 20.

ver. 21.

ver. 23,  
24.

ver. 29,  
30.



*Jesus. q. d.* "This tender plant out of a SERM.  
"dry ground shall flourish still, to the infinite XVII.  
"advantage of the sons of men. This  
"glorious person our Master, who lately  
"was but a little child, shall confound all  
"the wise and mighty of this world, and  
"we, his poor and despised disciples, shall  
"be more than conquerors through him.  
"This we believe on his promise, and thy  
"appearances, O God, for him hitherto;  
"and we pray that our faith and hope may  
"be more fully established and confirmed."

It is true, indeed, that this extraordinary spirit and conduct in these first christians was the fruit of very extraordinary assistance and communications from their exalted Master. But still the spirit of true christianity, and its proper tendency to better and change the mind, to cure the heart, to rectify and exalt the passions and affections, and so to prepare men for heaven and a blessed immortality, are the same in every age. And proportionable aids and assistance are offered to all who sincerely implore them, to render this divine religion effectual for the answering such great ends on the professors of it. And if any of them, even in these latter days, should be called out to be extraordinary advocates in the cause of Christ, so as to be exposed to sufferings and persecutions

SERM. cutions for his sake; they also may expect  
 XVII. in such a time of need the fulfilment of their  
 Lord's promise unto them, in a supply of  
 extraordinary courage, support and strength.

But,

II. We may farther remark from this  
 passage of scripture, that the temper and  
 behaviour of the disciples of such a Master  
 is very much observed by the world about  
 them.—This was the case with respect to  
 the first disciples, and it holds true in every  
 age.

Christians have many eyes upon them.

2 Cor. iii. They are *known and read of all men.*  
 2.

Their profession is open and public. They  
 are supposed to *have been with Jesus*; though  
 not in person, as his first disciples were, yet  
 by wearing his name, taking on them his  
 religion, and meeting him in his sacred  
 institutions, especially at his holy table, in  
 which he has promised to be spiritually pre-  
 sent with his disciples. And as the nature  
 and design of his religion is so well known,  
 and the character of their Lord and Master  
 so fully manifested: so an observing world  
 will be frequently comparing persons and  
 characters together, and watching, whether  
 the servant obeys his master, and the dis-  
 ciple endeavours to resemble his Lord;  
 whether he who sits sometimes at the feet  
 of

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of Jesus to hear his word takes care to act SERM.  
in life like one who has such a teacher, and XVII.  
such divine instruction; whether they who  
eat and drink with him at his table, and  
there profess to glory in him, behave like his  
friends afterwards, and endeavour to honour  
his name, and promote his cause and inter-  
est in the world; or whether they go away  
and forget whose they are, and live like the  
servants of a very different master.

And according as the behaviour of the ser-  
vant and disciple is found to be, either con-  
sistent or inconsistent with his profession, so  
will the opinion and practice of the obser-  
vers be generally influenced, with regard to  
the religion itself. They will either have their  
esteem and veneration for it increased and  
strengthened, or their prejudices against it  
more fully confirmed. — This our blessed  
Lord himself hinted to his first disciples;  
when he told them, that they were *the light* Mat. v.  
*of the world, and like a city set upon a hill* 14.  
*which could not be hid.* And what he said  
to them reaches, in a just sense, to all who  
should wear that character afterwards. Nay,  
what the apostle said of himself and his bre-  
thren in a particular case, may very well be  
accommodated here: *We, as christians, are* 1 Cor. iv.  
*made a spectacle to the world, to angels, 9.*  
*and to men.*

And



SERM.

XVII.

And therefore it follows,

III. That it is of the greatest importance for christians so to live in the world, as that it may always be taken notice of to their commendation and praise, that *they have been with Jesus*, or are his disciples.

To such a life they are most strongly obliged. This their very profession supposes, and engages them to. This is the import of all their attendance on Christ's instructions, and of their solemn dedications of themselves to him. And without such a behaviour, they are living a gross and direct contradiction.

God himself justly expects it from them : that, when he has favoured them with the best religion in the world, and sent no less a person than his own Son to be their teacher and their Lord, and when they profess to receive him as such ; they should, in some good measure, act and *walk worthy of him, who has thus called them to his eternal kingdom and glory* by Jesus Christ.—And Jesus himself does also most justly require it, as the only proper way to discover the influence of his doctrine and religion upon them.—Nay, even wicked men, who are also among the observers of the christian in this world, will expect him to live in a manner becoming his profession ; and if their expectations are

1 Theff. ii.  
12.

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are not answered, in some degree, will from SERM.  
thence harden themselves so much more in XVII.  
their iniquities.

Let us then, my fellow-christians, from  
a sense of the eye of God upon us, and the  
love of Christ Jesus constraining us, so act  
and behave as his disciples indeed : that we  
may not wear his name, and yet be a dis-  
grace to him, and a reproach to ourselves,  
and a scandal to the church ; but, on the  
contrary, *that the name of the Lord Jesus* <sup>2 Theff. i.</sup>  
*may be honoured and glorified in and by* <sup>12.</sup>  
*us* : and that whenever we are taken notice  
of as christians, who have been at a sacra-  
mental table, and there appeared serious and  
devout, it may be found to the honour of  
our Master, and the credit of his religion in  
the world.

And to this end, let us endeavour to dis-  
cover this true christian temper and character  
in the following instances.

1. In the constant distinguishing holiness  
of our lives and conversations.

Holiness is the glory of God : and it was  
the peculiar glory of the Son of God, when  
in our world. It was that which cast such  
a lustre on his example, and brightened the  
path he trod. Since then *He which bath* <sup>1 Pet. i.</sup>  
*called us is holy* ; and *He which came and* <sup>15.</sup>  
*dwelt among us in flesh was, though in all* <sup>Heb. iv.</sup>  
*points* <sup>15.</sup>

SERM. points tempted like as we are, yet without sin,  
 XVII. *holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from*  
 cap. vii. *sinners : let us be holy in all manner of con-*  
 26. *versation.* Especially, when we consider,

that it was for this purpose that God  
 hath called us in Christ, *that we might*  
 Eph. i. 4. *be holy, and without blame before him. Let*

*no corrupt or prophane communication ever*  
 Eph. iv. *proceed out of our mouths.—* Let us carefully  
 29. cultivate universal purity ; *cleansing our-*

*selves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the*  
 2 Cor. vii. *spirit, and perfecting holiness in the fear of God,*  
 1. *after the example of the holy Jesus, the*  
*institutions of his gospel, and the concur-*  
*ring influences of his spirit of holiness and*  
*grace. And let us be careful as much as*

*possible, to abstain from all appearance of evil.*  
 1 Thess. v. *That so others may observe, we bring away*  
 22. *with us from our religious exercises, and*

*especially from the Lord's table, that hatred*  
*of sin, and love of purity, which we pro-*  
*fessed to have, when we beheld the memo-*  
*rials of a Saviour bleeding and dying on a*  
*cross for sin ; and that this principle habitu-*  
*ally governs us, and engages us to live more*  
*like the purchase of him, who gave himself*  
 Tit. ii. 14. *for us, that he might redeem us from all ini-*  
*quity, and purifie unto himself a peculiar peo-*  
*ple, zealous of good works.*

2. Let others take knowledge of us that  
*we have been with Jesus, from our coura-*  
*geous asserting his cause, our fervent zeal in*  
 his



his service, and our promoting his interest SERM.  
in the world, on all proper occasions. XVII.

It is not enough to say we glory in the cross of Christ at a sacrament only, where we meet with no opposition; but we are to glory in him before the world: not by a vain ostentation; but by daring to own and avouch him as our Lord and Master before a multitude of scoffing sinners, and to vindicate his name and religion against the censures and cavils of corrupt and wicked men; by speaking of the goodness of his cause, the wisdom, the reasonableness, and the excellence of his service.

Again; we must show our regards to him, by preferring his interests to our own; and by persevering in our attachments to him to the end, notwithstanding the most violent opposition, and the most cruel usage from men.

And that we may thus act, let us often take knowledge of ourselves, and call ourselves to an account, where we have been, and what we have seen, when with Jesus at his table; and from the remembrance of his love in dying for us, fix our good purposes and resolutions for him more strongly than ever.

3. Let us discover ourselves to *have been*  
with Jesus by our strong benevolence to all  
man-

SERM. mankind, and our encreasing affection to all  
XVII. our fellow christians.

*God is love, and so is Jesus the Son of*  
1 Jo. iv. 8. *God.* No man therefore can be a true dis-

ciple of this Jesus, any more than a child of God, and truly regenerate, who is under the prevailing influence of hatred, malice and revenge. The very spirit and genius of the christian religion is all kindness and benevolence. And this is Christ's new com-

mandment to his followers: *As I have loved*  
John xiii. 34, 35. *you, do ye also love one another. By this shall men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*—And he that has been with Jesus at his table, that feast of love, and hath seen and felt there how he loved us, with what astonishing compassion; with what a heart must such a christian come away from that solemnity? how dilated to embrace all his fellow-creatures? how desirous of their happiness? and how ready to do every thing that might promote it?—And what a glow must he feel within him towards all his fellow christians? how will he esteem each as himself, and *be of one heart and one soul* with them?  
Act. iv. 32.

The first christians were peculiarly exact in their obedience to this new command of their Lord; and their harmony and affection were so conspicuous to the world, that their enemies took notice of it with wonder, and

and said: "See how these christians love SERM.  
"one another!" And happy would it be, XVII.  
if christians in our day were more distin-  
guished by the same spirit! That now, since  
the christian church is no longer honoured  
with extraordinary gifts, the members of it  
would covet, and seek after that *more excel-*  
*lent attainment, even charity and love, which* 1 Cor. xiii. 8.  
*shall never fail!*

4. Let the world *take knowledge of us*  
*that we have been with Jesus*, by our grow-  
ing indifference to the present life, and con-  
tinued improvement in the heavenly tem-  
per and life.

In this respect, also, we should imitate our  
Master and his first disciples.—As he and they  
were in the world, so let us be. And how  
was that? Why, living above the world,  
while in it; and constantly tending towards  
the other and nobler state in heaven.

Let us then, after we have been conver-  
sing with Jesus at his table, and have there  
seen the contempt he has thrown on this  
world of ours, and all the pomps and glories  
of it, and have communicated with our fel-  
low christians under the character of pil-  
grims and strangers upon earth, and so pre-  
paring for heaven, professing to be *crucified* Gal. vi.  
*to the world by the cross of Christ*; let us go <sup>14.</sup>  
from the sacred services of this day, and con-  
verse in the world, and with the persons



SERM. things of it, as those who preserve a be-  
 XVII. coming indifference towards it, and habitu-  
 ally prefer heaven to earth. Let it be seen,  
 on all proper occasions, that we have chosen  
 something better than mortal good for our  
 portion; and that we can live upon that wise  
 and excellent choice through all the changes  
 of this state of trial, and are principally in-  
 tent on the final and everlasting felicity.  
 Let us carry this heavenly frame and tem-  
 per into our families and closets, and into all  
 our concerns in the present life; that we  
 may show a different spirit from that of the  
*men of this world, who have their portion in  
 this life only.*

Pf. xvii.  
 14.

And then, let the consideration of our  
 Master's being no longer in this world, but  
 gone to heaven, more powerfully attract our  
 desires and affections thither. Thither let  
 us continually aspire and tend; and for that  
 blessed state and world let us be preparing  
 by all the means of grace: till he, who is  
 gone before not only as our Lord, but as  
 our forerunner, shall come again and take  
 us to himself; and so fulfil that good word  
 of promise wherein he has caused all his  
 servants to hope: *Where I am there shall*

Jo. xii. 26. *also my servant be.* Amen.



## SERMON XVIII.

The glories of the returning Saviour.

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2 THESS. i. 10. first part.

*When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.---*

**A**S we have often, upon our sacramental sabbaths, meditated on the first appearance of Jesus in our world, on his holy life, his meritorious death, his glorious resurrection and ascension to the majesty on high; so it may be both instructive and pleasant sometimes to carry our thoughts still farther, even to his second and his final coming. For such a period as this his gospel teaches us to expect: that though now the heavens have received him out of our

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SERM. fight, yet all our concerns with him are not  
 XVIII. over, nor is he to remain for ever conceal-  
 ed from our view ; on the contrary, it is the  
 distinguishing character of every true chris-  
 tian that he is *looking for the blessed hope, and  
 the glorious appearing of the great God and  
 our Saviour Jesus Christ.* Every sacrament is  
 a pledge of this his appearance ; and as often  
 as we meet around that sacred table, we do  
 show the Lord's death till he come.

Tit. ii. 13.  
 1 Cor. xi.  
 26.

And as in the mean time both ministers\*  
 and people are dropping away from their  
 public assemblies by death, it must be a  
 comfort to us to think, that they are not lost :  
 only gathered together unto him, to be  
 present with him above ; till the whole assem-  
 bly being compleated, a vast multitude  
 which no man can number, out of every kin-  
 dred, and nation, and people, and tongue, they  
 shall return and appear with him, their  
 Lord, and life, and glory ; when he shall  
 come in the most public manner to be glori-  
 fied in his saints, and admired in all them that  
 believe. This is the awful scene that shall  
 be displayed at the end of the world : when  
 all the methods of divine providence and  
 grace, with reference to our world, shall  
 close ;

Rev. vii.  
 9.

\* This Sermon was preached June 1, 1740. with some  
 reference to the deaths of the Reverend Dr. Harris, and  
 Mr. Tidcombe, but a few days before.



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close; and he shall sit as judge of the quick SERM.  
and dead; and having finished his work, as XVIII.  
mediator, shall then deliver up the kingdom to  
God, even the Father, that God may be all in all. 1 Cor. xv. 24, 28.  
For God hath appointed a day in which he will  
judge the world in righteousness, by that man Act. xvii. 31.  
whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given  
assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised  
him from the dead. All must appear at that  
tribunal, to receive according to what they 2 Cor. v. 10.  
have done in the body, whether it be good or  
bad. So the apostle teaches us: For the  
Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with 2 Theff. i. 7-10.  
his mighty angels: in flaming fire, taking ven-  
geance on them that know not God, and that  
obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
who shall be punished with everlasting destruc-  
tion from the presence of the Lord, and the glory  
of his power; and at the same time to be glo-  
rified in his saints, and admired in all them  
that believe.

In my farther handling this portion of  
scripture, I would persue the following easy  
method: I shall endeavour to explain and  
illustrate each part of the words distinct-  
ly; and then conclude with some suit-  
able and practical reflexions on the  
whole.

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SERM. I. In the last and solemn day of Christ's  
XVIII. appearance, it is declared to be one eminent  
design of his coming, *that he may be glorified in his saints.*

There seems to be something very grand and delightful in this representation of the apostle; and a holy soul cannot but look forward, with eager expectation and joy, to the happy and illustrious season. But what is it? It may be differently understood, according as the preposition is differently translated.

1. *He shall be glorified among his saints; i. e. He shall then appear among them in the most glorious and splendid form.*

He will not then appear any more in the  
Phil. i. 6, 7 *form of a servant, but will come in the form*  
1 Th. iv. *of God. He will descend from heaven with*  
16. *a shout, with the voice of the arch-angel, and*  
Lu. ix. 26. *the trump of God. He shall appear in his own*  
*glory, (in that which is properly his glory;*  
Mat. xxi. *that which in his last prayer he requested*  
31. *of the Father upon the finishing his work*  
*he would receive him to: And now,*  
*O Father, glorify thou me with thine own*  
*self, with the glory which I had with thee be-*  
Joh. xvii. *fore the world was) and in his Father's glory,*  
ver. 5. *and in the glory of his holy angels; so that*  
Mat. xxv. *he shall be then beheld coming in the clouds,*  
31. *and sitting on the throne of his glory.*

1 Jo. iii. 2. *His saints shall then see him as he is,*  
That

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That very appearance which shall make him SERM.  
so terrible to the wicked, that *flame of fire* XVIII.  
which from his presence shall blaze out a-  
gainst them to consume them, shall shine and ver. 8.  
blaze forth in the most benign and friendly  
manner on his servants; not to destroy,  
but to cheer and satisfy, and refresh them.  
For so we read of this period, as what will be  
*a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord*; Acts iii.  
of this Lord, even Jesus, who *before was* 19-21.  
*sent under the character of a reconciler and*  
*a Saviour, but whom the heavens must re-*  
*ceive, or detain, till the time of the restitu-*  
*tion of all things.*

When he was transfigured on the mount,  
where *his face shone like the sun, and his* Mat. xvii.  
*raiment was white and glistering as the light*; <sup>2.</sup>  
he was then glorified in the presence of Peter,  
and James, and John; and St. Peter ac-  
cordingly speaks of himself and them, as  
having been *witnesses to this his majesty*. But 2 Pet. i.  
at last he shall appear and reside among all <sup>16.</sup>  
his saints in all the fulness of his glory; his  
body shining forth with the strongest splen-  
dour, and in the utmost refinement and  
beauty that it can possibly wear.

When he left our world, he ascended up into  
heaven in a cloud; and was *received up into* 1 Tim. iii.  
*glory*, attended by a convoy of angels, and  
conveyed to his own mansions: and by that  
manner of going to heaven was he glorified  
in



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SERM. in or among his disciples. *In like manner XVIII.* (said one of his bright witnesses, that was left behind to comfort the astonished disciples)

Act. i. 11. *shall he come again*; even in a cloud of glory, and be visible, not to the twelve only, but to all his saints. This is called therefore, by

Tit. ii. 13. way of emphasis, *his glorious appearance.*

The natural sun, when it first rises upon the earth, not only sheds a glory upon it, by chasing away the darkness of the night, but is also in a sense glorified in return; as the inanimate, the vegetable creation appear to feel, and in a sort acknowledge its glory, by yielding to its influences. As the day increases, the glory strengthens; and the sun, which God made to rule the day, shines confessed the glory of the creation.—When the sun of righteousness first appeared, he

Hag. ii. 7. indeed was *the desire of all nations*; because

Mal. iv. 2. he came *with healing under his wings*, or as it may be rendered, with salvation in his rays: and therefore it was said of that appear-

Lu. i. 78, 79. *ance, that the day spring from on high had visited us, even those who before sat in darkness and the shadow of death.* But that

glorious sun, that blessed luminary set in a cloud at the close of his natural day; such a cloud, as obscured the face of the whole visible heavens. But he arose again, and ascended to the fountain of light, from which he proceeded as an eternal beam.

And

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And when he returns at this important sea-  
son, he shall shine forth in his meridian lus-  
tre; that all the moral obedient creatures in  
this world may confess his glory, and open  
and expand to his salutary influences. SERM. XVIII.

Thus then shall he be glorified among his  
saints. He shall appear in the midst of them  
all, from the beginning to the end of the  
world, in all the fulness of his glory; and  
every one of them shall be able to triumph  
in the accomplishment of holy Job's pro-  
phesy: *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and  
that though after my skin worms have destroyed  
this body, yet in my flesh I see God; whom I  
now see for myself, and mine eyes behold him,  
and not another for me; though my reins have* Job xix.  
25—27.  
been first consumed within me.—All of them  
with one consent shall look on him whom  
they have loved, and confess him their light  
and their glory.

Again;

2. He shall then be glorified in his saints;  
as he shall then finish and compleat their re-  
demption, and cloath them with bodies of  
glory like his own.

*When Christ, who is their life, shall appear,* Col. iii. 4.  
*then shall they also appear with him in glory.*

They are, as the apostle saith, *to be glorified* Rom. viii.  
17.  
*together, the head with all the members; and*  
*the glory which his body the church derives*  
from

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SERM. from him its Lord and head shall reflect  
XVIII. back a lustre and an honour on him.

Heb. ii. 10. *It pleased God, of whom are all things, and by whom are all things, when designing to bring many sons to glory, to appoint his own Son to be the leader and conductor of this grand affair; to begin, proceed, and carry on the design, till it is perfected in their full salvation, both of soul and body, in the heavenly world: and to make him perfect, i. e. to consecrate him to this arduous work, by his own sufferings and death. He came, he saw, he conquered, he surmounted*  
ver. 14. *all difficulties; through death he destroyed him*  
Col. ii. 15. *that had the power of death; spoiled principalities and powers, making a show of them openly: and then returned to heaven to God,*  
Jo. xx. 17. *under the character of his Father, and our Father, his God, and our God, to prepare and secure mansions of bliss, and thrones of glory there, for all his faithful servants and followers. And now when he comes again to receive them to himself, and fix them in his presence; will there not be a revenue of glory redound to him who has thus finished the work, and bestowed the crown?*  
Jo. xiv. 3. *If though Israel were not gathered, yet would he appear glorious in the eyes of the Lord; how much more glorious will he appear, when he shall have gathered all his saints together,*  
Isa. xlix. 9. *together,*



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together, saved them from the ruins of the SERM.  
apostacy, purged them from all remainders XVIII.  
of sin, sanctified them wholly, and deliver-  
ed them from hell and the dominion of death;  
and *from the bondage of corruption*, raised Rom. viii. 21.  
them *to the glorious liberty of the sons of God?*  
when he shall see the travail of his soul  
abundantly answered, and his desire fully  
satisfied? when he shall appear at the head  
of the shining multitude, of all the sons  
of God brought safe to glory; and say, with  
a divine pleasure: "*Behold, here am I, and* Isa. viii. 18.  
*the children which thou hast given me!*  
"*thine they were, and thou gavest them me,* Jo. xvii. 6, 12.  
"*and they have kept thy word: and I have*  
"*kept them in thy name* through every hour  
"*of temptation, through all the troubles*  
"*and trials of a wicked world, through all*  
"*the changes and wastes of death; and*  
"*none of them is lost, but those who made*  
"*themselves sons of perdition?*" When  
he shall *present them* to the Father *a glorious* Eph. v. 27.  
*church without spot or wrinkle, holy and with-*  
*out blame before him;* how will their com-  
pleat glory, their finished felicity, purcha-  
sed, wrought out, and now bestowed by him  
reflect on him an unspeakable honour, and  
make him appear grand and illustrious in the  
eyes of all heaven?

When upon beholding the vast as-  
sembly at the right hand of the judge, it  
shall be asked: *Who are these, and whence*  
*came*

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SERM. *came they ? and this shall be the answer :*

XVIII. *" These are they that have, many of them,*

*" come out of great tribulation, and all out*

*" of a world of sin, temptation, trouble,*

Rev. xvii. *" and death ; and they have washed their*

13, 14. *" robes, and made them white in the blood of*

*" the Lamb ; they obeyed his gospel, they*

*" followed his example, they trusted his*

*" promises, they yielded to the scepter of*

*" his grace ; and they are now got into his*

*" kingdom, and are more than conquerors*

*" through him that loved them : " surely, as*

*it will then appear they owe their victory*

*and their reward to him, so their being put*

*into the full possession of it will be an ho-*

*nour and a glory to him. So a mighty*

*prince appears more august and glorious, in*

*proportion to the largeness and grandeur*

*of his retinue ; especially if they are those,*

*whom he hath himself redeemed from cap-*

*tivity, and advanced near his own throne.*

*So shall this King Messiah, who has found-*

*ed his dominion in his blood, and ascended*

*from his cross to his throne, appear more*

*glorious and magnificent by this vast num-*

*ber of loyal happy creatures ; all of them re-*

Rev. v. 9. *deemed to God by his blood, and taken to be*

*with him, and serve him in the most grand*

*and illustrious manner there.*

*And then he will be most eminently glo-*

*rified in his saints, not only in his perfecting*

*their*

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their spiritual redemption, but also in his then SERM.  
cloathing their happy perfect spirits with bo- XVIII.  
dies of glory. Here, how will he display the  
glory of his power; when that which fell a  
clod shall rise a star, and reflect an unspeak-  
able brightness! when *that which was sown* 1 Cor. xv.  
*in corruption he shall raise in incorruption;* 42, 43.  
*that which was sown in dishonour he shall raise*  
*in glory!* when he shall change their vile bo-  
dies, the bodies of their humiliation and a-  
basement, and fashion them like to the body of Phil. iii.  
his own glory, according to that mighty work- 21.  
ing, whereby he is able to subdue even all things  
unto himself! when they shall stand forth  
so many shining forms, the exact resem-  
blance of his glory! When he shall beam  
forth light and splendour upon them, and they  
shall catch the blaze, and appear all cloathed  
with a like brightness: then shall it be tru-  
ly said, that they are comely and glorious,  
through his comeliness and glory put upon  
them.—And his goodness will appear glo-  
rious too in this honour then put upon his  
saints: when it shall be seen not only that he  
hath made their bodies like to his own, but  
also for what reason he stooped and humbled  
himself to wear a mortal body, that he emp-  
tied himself of the form of God, and took on Phil. ii.  
him the form of a servant: for what reason he 7.  
would submit to death, even that the em-  
pire



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SERM. pire of it might not be perpetual; and that he  
 XVIII. rose again as *the first begotten from the dead*,  
 that so he might rescue this mean ignoble  
 Rev. i. 5. part of their natures from the dishonour and  
 insults of the grave; and carried his own  
 body to heaven, that he might raise the  
 human nature to the highest dignity and  
 honour possible in himself, as an earnest and  
 pledge, that the bodies of his saints shall be  
 advanced to the same honour too.

What a display will there be in that day  
 of the glory of his wisdom, his pati-  
 ence and compassion, his power, and his  
 love and grace; in his first undertaking  
 this grand work of salvation, in his guiding  
 and conducting the saints all along in this wil-  
 derness, and at last conferring the full reward?  
 This shall be evident not only to the saints  
 themselves, who shall feel themselves thus  
 perfectly happy and blessed in the presence  
 and joy of their Lord, but to *the whole innu-*  
*merable company of angels* too: they also shall  
 behold him then *glorified in his saints*. They  
 themselves became willing servants to this  
 exalted Redeemer: they were chearfully  
 employed under him in *ministring* at his  
 Heb. i. 14. order to *these heirs of salvation* during their  
 minority and abode in this distant world;  
 they were continually looking into the  
 scheme of redemption by him with curious  
 wonder, tracing the whole, and observing  
 how

how he carried on his work, travelling in SERM.  
the greatness of his strength, till he had XVIII.  
fully accomplished it; they beheld his love  
of holiness and virtue which carried him  
through all, and welcomed him to his  
throne, as infinitely worthy: and now they  
shall behold him still more glorious; glo-  
rious in himself, and in them whom he has  
ransomed and saved too.

But I proceed,

3. In that day the Lord Jesus *shall be glorified also by his saints*; who will then join in the noblest and most elevated ascriptions of honour, and glory, and praise to him.

When they shall find this to be the blessed and happy end of all the methods of his grace, and all the providences of his kingdom; when they shall see themselves saved from death and hell, and made compleatly happy and glorious in their entire persons; and find that they are indebted for all the glory that is in them, and shines about them, to his undertaking and death; and that they now triumph through him, and are advanced to thrones and crowns, and an everlasting kingdom, through the power and grace of *the Lamb that was slain*, and in consequence of his undertaking: with what transporting pleasure

D d

will

SERM. will they joyn that exalted song: *Worthy is XVIII. the Lamb that was slain, and has redeemed us to God by his blood, to receive power and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing!* while every creature in heaven and earth shall catch the sound, and reply: *Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever!*

Rev. v.  
12, 13.

Nay, he shall be then glorified by them, not only on account of their own being owned by him, and being received to his glory, but on account also of his taking vengeance on the wicked, on his enemies, who would not by all the methods of his grace, and unexampled love, be prevailed with that he should reign over them; and *punishing them with everlasting destruction, banishing them from his blissful presence which makes heaven.* They will adore the wisdom, and love of righteousness and justice, that appears in this *wrath of the Lamb* breaking forth upon them, whom his love and all the pleadings of his blood could not move nor prevail on to bring them to repentance. And when the awful sentence shall be pronounced against them, heaven, and all the holy souls shall hear and approve: *Just and true are thy ways, O thou King of saints. Who shall fear thee and glorifie thy holy name?* Salvation to  
our

ver. 9.

Rev. vi.  
16.

Rev. xv.  
3, 4.

Rev. vii.  
10.



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our God and to the Lamb ! Thou art righteous, SERM.  
O Lord, because thou hast judged thus ; and XVIII.  
true and righteous are thy judgments.

Thus shall the Lord Jesus be glorified in Rev. xvi.  
5, 7.  
his saints. He shall appear in glory in the  
midst of them, and their eyes shall behold  
with joy and transport this King in his glo-  
ry.—He shall be glorified in what he shall  
then do in and for them ; finishing and  
compleating their redemption, fixing them  
in a state of perfect happiness, and cloathing  
their bodies with a glory like his own.—And  
in consequence of this, he shall receive from  
them the noblest and most exalted ascrip-  
tions of honour and glory, and thank-  
giving.

But to proceed ; it is farther added,

II. *He shall come to be admired in all them  
that believe.*—To show himself admirable in  
them, and to be admired by them.—This  
final perfecting and glorifying of his saints  
shall render him the object of the most  
delightful wonder and surprize both to the  
saints themselves, and to all the glorious in-  
habitants of the heavenly world.

But whence will this their admiration  
rise ? from considering what they once were,  
and now are ; and what this glorious Lord  
did and suffered to procure this happy dif-  
ference.

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SERM. 1. *He will then be admired in all them*  
 XVIII. *that believe, from the consideration of what*  
 they once were, and what they then shall  
 be.

When the glorified creatures beholding themselves and one another in their white robes, with palms of victory in their hands, shall think who they were, from whence they came, and to what a place they are conducted; when comparing their former and their then present state, they shall be struck with the amazing difference, and shall find it all owing to him: with what admiring eyes will they look up to Jesus their great Redeemer? To remember who they were: the children of men, poor feeble creatures  
 Job iv. 19 *of yesterday, dwelling in houses of clay, and having their foundation in the dust; and, though as the creatures of God, not below his notice, yet as sinful creatures, those who had joyned in a rebellion and apostacy from him, for ever unworthy of his family, and deserving nothing but the marks of his displeasure and vengeance; and instead of that, to find they are owned as his children, raised from dust, and death, and hell, to immortal life, and glory, and heavenly thrones; with what strong accents will these words be uttered: Lord! what is man, that thou shouldst thus magnify him? or the Son*

*The glories of the returning Saviour.* 405

*Son of man, that thou shouldst thus visit him?* SERM.  
To think from whence they came, from a XVIII.  
world lying in wickedness, from a state of tri-  
als, temptations and conflicts; from among a  
vast multitude of perishing wretches, made  
miserable through their own folly and wil-  
ful disobedience; from a world now wel-  
tring in fire with many of its accursed inha-  
bitants; and whither they are now brought,  
to the paradise of God, to glory and ho-  
nour and immortality, to the *house not* 2 Cor. v. 1.  
*made with hands, eternal in the heavens:*  
Lord! what astonishment will this occa-  
sion!

For the saints to think, what a frail sickly  
body they once carried about with them;  
what a poor and sorry dwelling it was for  
an immortal spirit; how much they suffer-  
ed by means of it; some of them long and  
tedious hours, if not years, of anguish and  
sighing and crying, and pain; and especially  
what a mean disgraceful state they left it in,  
when their spirits took their flight to hea-  
ven: and now to find it so vastly altered;  
to go out of a body weak and shattered, and  
sinking into corruption; and, after a short  
state of intermediate happiness, to enter into  
a body of light and incorruption, ever-du-  
ring strength and firmness of constitution,  
and unfading splendor; and from this to



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SERM. look up to their glorious model, the Lord  
 XVIII. himself in his own body, and find they owe  
 it all to him: with what looks must they  
 behold him? with what transports must  
 they see him arrayed in majesty and love,  
 and fall worshipping at his feet?

And then,

2. *He shall be admired in them that be-  
 lieve*; when beholding and feeling all the  
 happiness and glory of which they are  
 partakers, they shall consider what that  
 grand and illustrious person suffered in or-  
 der to bring them to it, and the infinite  
 obligations they are under to him on that  
 account.

Heb. i. 3. To think who he was, *the brightness of the  
 Father's glory, the express image of his per-  
 son*; and that for them he left his Father's  
 bosom to come into this world, to take a  
 mortal body, to die, to suffer the cursed  
 death of the cross, that he might raise them  
 to that glory: to think what mountains  
 he levelled, what valleys he filled up; what  
 difficulties he sustained, what conflicts he  
 endured, to deliver them from going down  
 to the pit of destruction: what love, what  
 joy unspeakable will mix with their admi-  
 ration; when the saints shall receive the  
 crown from him that purchased it for them,  
 and see themselves drest in his glorious like-  
 ness

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ness who was content to be humbled, de-SERM.  
based and despised for them? XVIII.

To think how diligent, how unwearied he was in working out their salvation, not his own; how he appeared *straitened till it* Lu. xii.  
*was accomplished*; and then to trace over <sup>50.</sup>  
that grand and magnificent accomplishment:  
O! how will they admire and wonder at  
his boundless compassion and condescend-  
ing goodness? with what astonishment will  
they cry out: "*Lord! what are we, and what* <sup>2Sam.vii.</sup>  
*is our Father's house, that thou hast brought* <sup>18.</sup>  
*us hitherto? We are less than the least of* <sup>Gen.</sup>  
*all the mercy and all the truth that thou hast* <sup>xxxii. 10.</sup>  
*caused to pass before us*; we have deser-  
ved a hell: and yet behold! through thee  
are we brought safe, safe to an eternal  
heaven!"

And then to recollect how he led them  
on to this glory: to remember all the ways  
of his conduct in the wilderness, his pa-  
tience and condescending forbearance; to  
think of the wisdom and fitness of his gos-  
pel to begin the salvation in them, the  
spirituality of its doctrine, the force of its  
important motives; to think how long per-  
haps some of them were before they re-  
ceived it into their hearts, how often when  
he called they still neglected, he stretched  
forth his hand and they were yet regardless;  
and yet how he waited to be gracious till

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SERM. they consented and yielded to him as their  
 XVIII. King and Lord: to think of the mighty  
 change his gospel, and the concurring  
 influences of his spirit have gradually produced in them, till from earthly, vain, and carnal, they became heavenly minded, god-like, and pure, *holy as their God is holy*; and that this is now the blessed end of  
 1 Pet. i. 13. all, that *they see him as he is, and they are like him* too, not in the glory of their bodies only, but in the perfect rectitude of their spirits, having the same mind in them which is also in Christ Jesus their Lord: to think of all the methods of his dealing with them as the Lord and head, and King of his church, in order to fit them for this glory; of the various afflictive dispensations of his providence, the many difficulties he suffered them to meet with, and led them through; the various means he made to serve this important end, his over-ruling *all things to work for their good*, and his making *death itself to be theirs*:--when they shall think over all these circumstances, and then keep their eye fixed on this Lord himself; what strong passions and affections will rise and overflow their hearts? "And is this the Saviour that  
 "has purchased such a heaven for us; that  
 "went before to take possession of it in our  
 "names, and has at length, by the methods of the wisest grace, brought us  
 "to

Rom. viii.  
28.

1 Cor. iii.  
22.



“to the full enjoyment of it? We admire SERM.  
“and adore! How justly does he merit XVIII.  
“these distinguishing honours, in which he  
“shines! How well does that throne and  
“that crown become him, who passed  
“through a sea of blood to wear it! How  
“worthy is he, that we should cast our crowns  
“at his feet, as acknowledging that we  
“owe them all to him!” *He shall be ad-  
mired, thus justly admired, in, and by, all them  
that believe in that day.*

But your time now calls me to make some reflexions on this subject. And

1. The most natural and obvious is this: What a vast difference is there between Christ's first coming into our world, when he had undertaken the work of a Saviour, and his second appearance to compleat the mighty work?

This thought the very manner of expression in the text leads us to: *He shall then come in flaming fire with his mighty angels,—to be glorified in his saints, and admired &c.* How almost unavoidable is the inquiry hereupon: And did this grand and illustrious person ever appear among men before? yes, he did. *In the fulness of time Gal. iv. 4. God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.* He came at first in a state of humiliation and abasement; and, though with

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SERM. with the kindest designs, and though he  
XVIII. foreknew all he was to meet with, yet still,

~~~~~ he came into a sinful and ungrateful world ;  
Isa. liii. he came first to be *despised and rejected of*
3. 4. *men, to be a man of sorrows, and acquainted*

with grief, to bear our griefs, and carry our sor-
rows. He comes now to be glorified by his
saints, and by angels too, and to appear in the
fulfness of joy.—He came at first in so mean
and lowly a manner, that it was foretold by
the prophets, *many would be astonished at him,*
Isa. liii. *in as much as his visage would be marred more*
14. *than any man's, and his countenance more than*
the rest of the sons of men: so that there

would be a hiding of faces from him, as from
c. liii. 3, 4. *one esteemed stricken, smitten of God, and af-*
flicted. He comes the second time in a
body of glory, outshining the sun in the
firmament, and to be admired in all them
that believe. — He came at first to sorrow,
and self-denial, to pain and distress, to ago-
nies of soul, to tortures of body, to con-
tradiction of sinners, to bleeding and thirst,
to groan, and to die ; he came then to endure
the pain and the shame of a cross. He shall
come hereafter as a triumphant conqueror,
having all his enemies subdued under him,
amidst the shouts of angels and the whole
heavenly host ; while all his saints *shall lift*
Lu. xxi. *up their heads with joy, in full assurance that*
28. *their compleat redemption draws nigh.*—He

came

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came at first as a helpless infant; wrapped in swaddling cloaths, and laid in a manger. He shall come hereafter in his full strength; with this important and illustrious name written upon his vesture and upon his thigh: King of kings, and Lord of lords.—

SERM.

XVIII.

Lu. ii. 7.

Rev. xix.

16.

His first entrance was discovered by a few poor shepherds: but his second appearance shall be in the clouds of heaven; and then every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him, and all nations shall mourn because of him. When he first came in the

Rev. i. 7.

form of a servant though to his own people, his own received him not: but when he shall

Jo. i. 11.

appear in the glory of the deity, he shall be received and admired by his own then; and they will confess their Lord with transporting wonder: "This is he that stood con-

"demned at Pilate's barr, that was crown-

"ed with thorns, buffeted, spit on; that

"went up mount Calvary, wearied and faint-

"ing, bearing his cross. This is he that in the

Heb. v. 7.

"days of his flesh offered up fervent prayers,

"with strong crying and tears. This is he

"that was in a bloody sweat in the garden,

"and from whose sacred body streams of

"blood flowed forth on the accursed tree.

"This is he who was to the Jews a stum-

"bling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness.

1 Cor. i.

"He appears now what we all along

23, 24.

"esteemed

SERM. "esteemed him, *the wisdom of God, and*

XVIII. "*the power of God.* The scandal of the

"cross is ceased; only its triumphs remain:

"its enemies are overwhelmed and con-

Isa. xxv. "founded. *This is our Lord; we have wait-*

9. "*ed for him, and he will now save us!*"

2. How just and reasonable is an entire subjection of heart and soul to the gospel of Jesus now?

The gospel is the means which he makes use of to prepare and fit souls for glory; and unless it forms our spirits now, we shall never meet him with comfort in glory at last. It is by this divine instrument that we

Col. i. 12. are to be *made meet to be partakers of this inheritance of the saints in light*; and unless we are made meet we shall never obtain that inheritance. Unless we become saints, we do not believe to any valuable purpose; and unless we thus believe, we can never rejoice in, nor admire him in that his last magnificent appearing. This the apostle

therefore expressly mentions as the reason why he encouraged the Thessalonians to look for this coming with pleasure, and hope that they should be among the number of these glorified admiring creatures: *Because* (saith he in the words after my text) *our testimony among you was believed.* It was by their believing the report of the gospel with the

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the heart, that they became thus prepared unto glory. SERM. XVIII.

How sollicitous then should we be that this gospel takes hold of us; that we are not, after all, among them that will not obey it; for we read their doom*. And the words of my text, as connected with those that precede them, appear expressed in such a manner as to imply, that it will be a sad aggravation of their misery, when they shall behold the Lord Jesus thus glorified and admired in his saints, and find themselves cast at an eternal distance with this just but cutting reproach: *Behold ye despisers, and wonder, and perish!* Act. xiii. 41.

O how invaluable a treasure is this glorious gospel of the blessed God! How should we delight in our attendance on the ordinances of it, and especially with what pleasure should we celebrate the institution of the holy supper, which leads our views more directly to this grand and closing scene of all?

3. What a powerful argument is this subject for the continued faith and patience, and persevering obedience of the saints?

This

* *The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven—in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them who—obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction:—when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, &c.* ver. 8.—10.

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SERM. This is another use the apostle makes of XVIII. it, to comfort the suffering christians in his time, under all the trials and sufferings they met with, even with the prospect of this blessed period, when they should have a perfect salvation and eternal rest. And who would murmur and complain at the light afflictions which are here but for a moment, when they are set against this glory, which shall shortly be revealed? Who would suffer their hands to hang down, and their knees to grow feeble, when they have such a prize within their reach, and which they shall shortly seize as their own? Who would mind the banter and ridicule and scorn and contempt of a prophane world, when they have the hope of speedily appearing in this glorified admiring company about the throne of God and the Lamb! Nay, who would not be always abounding in the service of such a Lord now, who will so gloriously recompence his servants at last?

2 Cor. iv.
17.
Rom. viii.
18.

4. How should this subject reconcile us to the death of our religious friends, and especially those who have been eminent for their regards to this Lord and his interest on earth?

With this thought I began the subject; and with this thought I close it. When we consider the removal of such in one age after another only in one view, it has but a dark

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dark and gloomy aspect: but when we SERM.
consider it in another, we may have strong XVIII.
consolation. We should never therefore
think of our pious friends, though out of
our world, as persons of whom we can
have no hope; nor imagine that they will
escape the notice of their Master, merely be-
cause they are fallen asleep in him first. For
if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, 1 Thess.
even so them also that sleep in Jesus will God iv. 14—
bring with him. 18.
For when the Lord him-
self shall descend from heaven with a shout,
the dead in Christ shall rise first; then they
which are alive, and remain at the coming of
the Lord, shall be caught up together with them
in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and
so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore
comfort yourselves and one another with these
words.



SERMON



S E R M O N XIX.

The perfect worship of the heavenly world.

R E V. xxii. 3, 4.

*---And his servants shall serve him,
And they shall see his face.---*

SERM.
XIX.

The first
sermon
on this
text.

TH E S E words are part of a prophecy of the future state of happiness reserved for true christians; described as it is to us in the language of mortals, under a variety of the most pleasing and striking images.

When this state of happiness shall take place, or in what particular part of space the abode of these happy persons shall be, I shall not take upon me to determine; nor take up your time in disputing about the various speculative opinions relating to this account, which may serve to minister strife,
or,

or, at best, food only for curiosity, rather SERM.
 than godly edifying.—I would only observe, XIX.
 that the representations here made of this
 state of final happiness are borrowed from the
 antient scriptures,—E. G. Was there, at the
 beginning, a paradise in which the first pa-
 rents of the human race were placed? That
 future state shall be a much more noble and
 excellent paradise: in which, instead of one Gen. ii. 9.
 tree of life, and a forbidden tree in the midst
 of the garden, there shall be every where
trees of immortal life growing on each side of
the river of life, which flows through it; but ver. 23.
no curse shall find a place there. — Again:
 was Jerusalem of old the most honourable
 and glorious city, on account of God, even
 Jehovah, who was the Lord and King of
 Israel, his vouchsafing a visible symbol of his
 presence there, in the temple that was built
 in honour to his name? And were the high
 priest, the priests, and the levites, ministers
 there in that temple? The state of happi-
 ness of good persons hereafter is described as
 a city: *a city which has foundations, whose* Heb. xi.
builder and maker is God; a city which is 10.
called the new Jerusalem, coming down from Rev. xxi.
heaven; a city which the glory of God will r. 2, 10.
lighten. And those who serve and worship him
 there, as in his temple, shall perform their
 services in the most delightful exalted man-
 ner,

SERM.
XIX.

ner, and be encouraged, quickened, and honoured continually in their service, by their performing it under the full shine of the glory of the supreme object of their worship, and author of their felicity.

This heavenly city had been particularly described before, in the foregoing chapter. The prophetic vision goes on from the beginning of this chapter thus: *And he (i. e. the angel) shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as chrystal, issuing out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, (i. e. of the city) and on either side of the river, was the tree of life; which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruits every month: and the leaves of the trees were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse, as there was both on our first parents and on the ground for their sakes; but the throne of God, and of the Lamb shall be in it. And there his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face; and this name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither sight of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light, (and the Lamb is the light thereof;) and they shall reign for ever and ever.*

cap. xxi.
23.

Let our meditations at this time dwell on that part of the description of this future state

state of happiness, which must be a most SERM.
reviving thought to every sincere christian XIX.
here: that there *God's servants shall serve*
him; and they shall see his face. — In which
representation the two following general
heads seem intimated to us, worthy each of
them of a more particular enlargement: viz.

I. The nature of the service of the heavenly world, and the perfect manner in which it shall be performed: *There his servants shall serve him.* And then,

II. The strength and encouragement they shall receive in this service, and the honour and reward of it. All which seems included in those transporting words which follow: *They shall see his face.*

I. Let us inquire a little into the nature of the service of the heavenly world, and the perfect manner in which it shall be performed. Both which thoughts seem intimated to us in these words: *There his servants shall serve him.*

But who are the servants that shall be thus employed? All creatures are the servants of God; they are all in his hand, and he can make them perform all his pleasure. The angels are the most noble amongst his

SERM. rational servants ; *they excel in strength ; and*

XIX. *they, with all their hosts, are his ministers that*
 { surround his throne, *who do his command-*
 Pf. ciii. *ments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.*
 20.

But these are not the servants particularly referred to in my text. There are other intelligent beings made lower than these angels, yet capable of like glorious services with them, even those of the human

cap.vii. 9. race ; of whom *a great multitude which*
no man can number out of every kindred, and
nation, and people, and tongue, having been redeemed and sanctified by the blood of Christ the Lamb of God, and recovered

Col.i. 12. from an apostate world, and *made meet for*
this glorious inheritance of the saints in light,
 shall be taken to join and mingle with those exalted spirits around the throne of the divine Majesty, and do his will, as the angels do it, in heaven.

And this leads me now to inquire a little more particularly into the nature of that service in which these happy servants shall be employed.

Ubi sup. And, in the general, it may be expressed in the words of the psalmist, *their doing the will of God :* their attention to every intimation of his good pleasure ; and their ready execution of his commands of every kind, and in every part of his dominion, in
 which

which he may think proper to employ SERM.
them. Thus his holy angels serve him : **XIX.**
who if they are sometimes represented in 
scripture as *standing before God*, as the courtiers of an earthly monarch sometimes wait Dan. vii.
immediately on his person, and make up ^{10.}
his train ; at other times they are spoken of
as the messengers of his grace or vengeance,
and the executioners of it too, in distant
worlds : as the guardians and friends of the
virtuous and good even among the children
of men ; to assist them in their struggles and
conflicts with the temptations and dangers
thrown in their way by evil spirits, and, as
it were, to *cover their heads in the day of*
battle. They are ministring spirits sent forth Heb. i.
to minister unto them who shall be heirs of ^{14.}
salvation. And may not part of the bu-
siness and service in which the spirits of the
just shall be employed also, when they shall
be made equal to the angels, be much of the
same kind ? Surely they are not always to be
fixed only in silent wonder and admiration ;
but may also be employed in active services,
suitable to the full activity and vigour of
their sprightly powers, and refined natures.

But then as one eminent part of the em-
ployment and service in that most glorious
state of things will be that of the public
worship of the Deity ; their joining toge-

SERM. ther in the most grand acknowledgments
 XIX. of his perfections, in adoring, praising him,
 giving thanks unto his name, and ascribing
 blessing and honour, and glory, and power,
 and victory, and majesty to him : so in
 what follows I shall principally confine
 myself to this devout service.--And that this
 is to be one part of the work of heaven the
 scriptures evidently encourage us to expect.
 This the representation of it by a temple,
 and the allusion to the temple service
 under the Jewish dispensation, so frequent
 in this book, seems to intimate. And
 there are besides, in other places of scrip-
 ture, intimations to the same purpose. Thus
 in that well known place particularly:
 [Heb. xii.] *In the heavenly Jerusalem, the
 city of the living God, the innumerable com-
 pany of angels, and the spirits of just men
 made perfect,* are described as making up the
 church of God ; a large and noble society
 of devout worshippers. And as there was
 at certain seasons of the year a general assem-
 bly of all the inhabitants of Judea, and de-
 vout proselytes from all quarters, to perform
 their more solemn and grand acts of wor-
 ship, and grateful homage to the God of Is-
 rael ; so the apostle speaks of *the general
 assembly and church of the first-born writ-
 ten in heaven :* the large " glorious con-
 vention of all orders of blessed spirits,
 (as

cap. iii.

12.

cap. vii.

15.

Heb. xii.

22, 23.

Ibid.

(as a great man hath well expressed it) SERM.
 " which as it may be supposed constant at XIX.
 " all times, so it is supposeable to be more Mr.
 " frequented and solemn at some; and whi- Howe,
 " ther any may resort as quick as the glance vol. 2d.
 " of an eye, or a thought, and perhaps they p. 879.
 " do, at appointed seasons, so as to make more
 " solemn appearances before the throne of
 " God, as the laws and usages of that blef-
 " sed world may require. And with what
 " unspeakable pleasure must these pure,
 " celestial intelligences, all filled with light,
 " wisdom, life, benignity, love, and joy,
 " not only converse with one another, but
 " reverence, love, and worship their sove-
 " reign Lord? "

But this thought naturally leads us on to
 consider farther the manner in which these
 happy servants of God shall perform their
 services. For this also seems intimated to
 us, when it is said, that in that future blessed
 state, where all holy, and devout and faith-
 ful servants shall be got together, *there his*
servants shall serve him: i. e. all surely in
 one common manner: even those of the
 human race, that shall be admitted to that
 glorious adoring company, shall do him ho-
 mage there, in like manner as the angels now
 do in heaven.—And what manner is that?
 Why, to be sure, in the most perfect man-

SERM. ner ; whether it be considered absolutely or
 XIX. comparatively.

1. In the heavenly state the servants of God shall serve him in the most perfect manner, absolutely considered.

Just so as he expects they should ; and in the most worthy and exalted manner, their finite but improved rational powers and capacities can possibly admit of. Though to be sure, in the strict and proper sense, no service, performed by the noblest creature, can be so worthy of God, as to merit his acceptance ;

Nehem.
 ix. 5.

Pf. cxiii.
 5.

who is infinitely exalted above all blessing and praise. He, therefore, is most justly represented as *bumblng himself to behold the things that are done in heaven.* But it will be the service of perfect spirits, spirits naturally and morally perfect. They shall perform it in the full perfection of their natures, and with the most entire rectitude of their wills ; being then compleat in holiness, without any thing of taint or pollution belonging to them. The offerers shall be in their measure pure and holy, even as God is holy.

Ephes. v.
 27.

That general assembly shall be a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but perfectly holy, and without blemish.

But as the servants mentioned in my text are supposed to be such as have worn that character,

character, and endeavoured in some measure to answer it, on earth; so the advantage and perfection of their heavenly service will appear more strongly affecting and alluring to every true christian, if we consider it

SERM.
XIX.

II. In a comparative view; or as opposed to the manner in which they served God, even in their best hours here below.

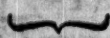
It is there, in that infinitely better world, that *his servants shall serve him*. What they do, on earth, both as to the performing his will, and in their exercises of worship and devotion, is in so weak, so very imperfect and broken a manner, and mixed with so much frailty, that it scarce deserves the name of service; considering who is their Master, their glorious Lord. But there in that better world, when they shall join the innumerable company of angels, and be made perfect, their service shall be much more noble and exalted; as different from what it once was, as they shall then differ from their former selves, and their former state and circumstances: just in the manner, that in their best frames here they wished and long to do, but could not attain; but were still restlessly aspiring after, that it might in some degree be better suited to the object of their worship, and the grandeur and dignity of their sovereign and Lord.

But

SERM. But to be a little more particular on this
 XIX. part of the subject :

1. There, in that future happy state, the faithful servants of God shall serve him in the most fervent and lively manner, without the least dulness and coldness, weariness and fatigue.

Here, in the present state, the christian is often retarded and slackened in his service by means of the incumbrances that hang about him, and heavy upon him. He dwells in a body of flesh; and by the close and intimate union of the soul with this gross system of matter, it is so influenced, that the mind is often sadly clouded, its perceptions flow, its active powers weakened and enfeebled, and the heart chilled with the cares and concerns of this life, and the constant prevailing influence of sensible things: so that he can sometimes scarce raise up his spirit to spiritual exercises as he would, by reason of the dead weight and clog that hangs heavy upon him.—The frequent returns, and long continuance of pain with many who are seriously and solemnly devoted to God through a Redeemer, prevent them from any active service of God at all, and confine them for a long while only to a bearing the will of God, in uneasiness and sorrow. They can neither serve him in his temple,

temple, nor in the world, but are obliged to SERM.
sit at home and keep silence.—Nay, and XIX.
when the servants of God are free from 
such restraints, when they enjoy the best
bodily health, and the fullest vigour of mind,
for the service of God, and engage in it
with some life and zeal, and fervour; yet
how soon are they fatigued and wearied in
the sacred employment, through a frail
body, which soon calls for relaxation and
relief? So that by that time the soul
gets upon the wing to God and heaven;
instead of soaring higher and higher,, it does
but flutter about a little, and then sinks
down again into its old confinement. Nay,
the greater the Christian's fervency is in his
best frames, the more are the animal spirits
exhausted, and the bodily strength weaken-
ed and fatigued.—Alas! how little, how very
little can the best do for God here on earth!
How soon does a little labour tire us? How
soon are our ideas clouded, our affections
drawn down to earth and time? So that
this is often the complaining language of
the saint, in his serious retirements and re-
flexion: “ Ah! how low and faint am I
“ in the service of my Lord and Saviour,
“ and in my progress and tendency towards
“ perfection?”

But in the future happy state, the ser-
vants of God shall serve him without any
of

SERM. of these imperfections, and painful complaints either of the inward or outward man.

XIX.

There they shall be delivered from all the incumbrances of dull mortality, from the sad influences of a body of flesh, and this clog of sin and death. And being pure spirits, they shall exert themselves with all their full force of their inborn strength in this most noble service: they shall move swift as light to execute all the high commands of the God of heaven; they shall be constantly full of the most holy fervour and zeal, without any damp or check upon it. And when these perfectly active and fervent spirits shall re-enter their bodies, they shall find them no more clogs and hindrances to them in their spiritual service, and exalted worship and devotion; but fit habitations for perfectly happy and holy spirits, and the most proper instruments for performing their noblest works. Then all the distempers of body and mind shall be quite healed: and the christian shall recover an healthful lively frame. “ Then (as it hath been well expressed) “ to be with God shall be their “ very element; loving, admiring, praising “ him shall be as natural to them as breathing once was: they shall be all spirit and “ life; feel themselves disburdened of every “ clog, and oppressive weight, that once “ hung upon them: no body of death “ shall

“ shall incumber them ; no deadness of SERM.
“ heart, no coldness of love, no drowsy XIX.
“ sloth, no remainder of averſeneſs to God, 
“ no earthly mind, no ſenſual inclinations
“ or affections, no ſinful diviſions between
“ God and the creatures.” But they ſhall
in the biggeſt ſenſe, thoſe words can poſſibly
be ſuppoſed to contain, be *ſervent in ſpirit* Rom. xii.
ſerving the Lord : and ſhall in the beſt man-^{1.}
ner *glorify God with their bodies and their* 1 Cor. vi.
ſpirits, which are his ! O bleſſed change ! O ^{20.}
happy day ! Again,

2. The ſervants of God in the future
happy ſtate ſhall ſerve him with the moſt
ſteady fixedneſs, and intenſeneſs of mind,
without the leaſt interruption or wandering.

Here, below, it is often far otherwiſe
with the beſt chriſtians. They are ſurround-
ed with objects of ſenſe ; which, by means
of the body, ſtrike forcibly on the mind,
and draw off its attention from things of
greater and more important concern, from
God and his ſervice. The fancy is painted
with a thouſand images, which ſtrike it
from theſe objects, and which, by its con-
ſtant working, are continually intruding
themſelves on the chriſtian in his moſt ſe-
rious hours. Hence his frequent complaints
of vain and wandering thoughts ; of too
great diſſipation of ſpirit at the beſt. Nay,
even

SERM. even the proper attention to the cares and
 XIX. businesses of this life, which may be in some
 measure necessary, is an almost unavoidable
 interruption in the nobler part of the service
 of God. And when we have leisure from
 them, as to time; yet even then, through
 our being so stately conversant with them,
 they follow us into our closets, into the house
 of God, and to his holy table. So that with-
 out constant care, they, like the birds of
 prey which came down upon Abrahams sa-
 crifice ready to devour it, eat out the heart
 and spirit of our most devout services.—How
 hard, often, *to watch with God and the Sa-
 viour one hour* in the exercises of faith, and
 love, and worship? By the time we can to-
 lerably fix our spirits, they are diverted, ei-
 ther inadvertently from the eye or the ear,
 or from some sudden suggestion from with-
 in. So that, in this sense we may accom-
 modate the words of the apostle, and say:
 Mat. xxvi. 40. *When we would do good, evil is present with
 us.*

Dom. vii.
 21.

But in the other state the servants of God
 shall serve him with an entire fixedness of at-
 tention. They shall be fully and wholly in their
 work: their minds shall be purified from
 every gross idea; their imaginations shall be
 thoroughly sanctified, and most gloriously
 enlarged; and their affections beat with
 the

the strongest tendency towards their God.—SERM.
There shall be nothing from within them XIX.
to divert their attention to every part of the
service of God, especially their acts of so-
lemn worship. And they shall have nothing
from without them to interrupt, or take off,
for the least moment, their attention to their
constant noble service of God. If they look
around them they behold all their glorified
fellow-servants as fixed and intent in their
service as themselves. This perfect service
of God has, now, the whole of them; it
is their only, their entire business: they
have no necessary avocations to any affair
beside, nor the least inclination to any other
employment.—And when they all meet and
join together in their full assembly, for the
solemn acts of worship of the Deity, they
are united in one heart and soul: by the
fervency of each, the whole society is kind-
led into one common flame, in which they
present themselves with their offerings be-
fore the eternal throne. While the light
and glory of the place, the unspeakable
transcendent beauty of that temple conspire
to preserve and increase their attention, and
to exalt their worship. Every look of these
glorified creatures on one another, instead
of taking off their regards from the great
and supreme object of their adoration,
thankf-

SERM. thanksgiving and praise, will only tend to
 XIX. quicken their zeal in this service, and to
 { excite each others ambition to try who among them shall love and serve him most, and obey him best.

I should now proceed to some other instances of the perfect manner in which the *servants of God shall serve* in the heavenly state. But the full enlargement on these most engaging contemplations will take up more time than the present season will allow.

I shall therefore conclude at present with only observing ; that what has been already suggested on this subject must make the true servants of God on earth more desirous of reaching that better state of service above. And the more so, in proportion as they have endeavoured to serve him here with acceptance, and have had any degrees of satisfaction in his work, and his courts below.

Have you, my fellow christians, ever
 Ps. lxxiii. found it *good to draw nigh to God* on
 28. earth ? Have you been enabled to do him some little service, and to pay him some devout honours in his courts, even in this lower world of weakness, imperfection, and distraction ? Have any of you this day found your spirits in some measure suited to the sacred employment ? How natural
 this

this breathing of your hearts hereupon : SERM.
“ *O when shall I come and appear before* XIX.
“ *God in his upper temple? There his ser-*
“ *vants shall serve him.*—And if I, infinite- Pf. xlii, 2.
“ ly unworthy as I am, may but through
“ divine grace arrive there, with what rap-
“ ture shall I utter those words: *Lord, it* Lu. ix. 33.
“ *is good to be here?* not as if I knew not
“ *what I said*; but as fully knowing, that I
“ shall have, not a tabernacle only for a
“ short residence in that blessed state but,
“ an ever-abiding mansion in the glorious
“ presence of my God; *in that presence* Pf. xvi.
“ *where there is a fulness of joy, and at his* 11.
“ *right hand where there are pleasures for*
“ *evermore. Amen.*





SERMON XX.

The perfect worship of the heavenly world.

REV. XX. 3d and 4th Verses.

---And his servants shall serve him.
And they shall see his face.---

SERM.
XX.

The second sermon on this text.

THESE words, I observed in a former discourse, are part of a prophecy of the future state of happiness reserved for true christians, described in language the most alluring to mortals. For these, I apprehend, are God's servants here mentioned: such as were once of the human race; who, being approved of God the judge of all, shall be admitted to that higher station of service, where the innumerable company of

of angels encompass the throne of God; and SERM.
they shall meet and mingle with them in XX.
one glorious society, and in the same happy
and honourable employment.

On this subject therefore I proposed

I. To inquire into the nature of this heavenly service, with the manner in which it shall be there performed. Its general nature is no doubt their doing the whole will of God.—But the scriptures lead us to consider their uniting in the public solemn worship of the Deity as one eminent part of the service of that perfect world, and their great employment there.

And I have already mentioned some things as to the manner in which this sacred service shall be there performed.—*There his servants shall serve him*, saith my text. How? In general those of the human race, who shall be admitted into that glorious society before the throne of God, shall serve him as the angels do, i. e. in the most perfect manner absolutely considered; and in a manner far beyond what, even with all their best endeavours, the most excellent saints could reach to here below. There they shall serve God, and worship him there in that manner, which shall be most worthy of God, and most pleasing to him; and so as in their best frames on earth they most

SERM. earnestly desired, and restlessly pursued. That
 XX. is : they shall serve him in the most fervent
 and lively manner, without weariness or
 fatigue : and with the most steady and fixed
 attention of mind, without the least wandering
 or interruption.—But these thoughts
 have been already enlarged on.

I now proceed, and add :

3. In that future state the happy servants
 of God shall serve him with perfect freedom
 and liberty of spirit, without the least restraint.

Here, in this distant sinful world, the
 willing mind and spirit is sadly checked,
 drawn back and fettered, and as it were,
 imprisoned in the body, and often pressed
 down through manifold infirmities. By these
 means its views are, at the largest, narrow
 and scanty ; its judgment partial, and too
 frequently biassed ; and its strongest efforts
 faint and languid : *so that it cannot always
 do the things it would.* Though the saint is
 in a prevailing degree recovered from the
 horrid slavery and vassalage of sin, so that
 it no longer reigns within him, nor is he
 carried about in constant captivity by the
 devil at his will ; but *by becoming God's wil-
 ling servant he is freed from it* : yet still
 this liberty, this freedom, this noblest moral
 freedom is but imperfect at the best. And
 the more a saint improves in moral good-
 ness

Rom. vi.
 13, 22.

ness and rectitude, the more sensible is he SERM.
of this disadvantage his spirit labours under XX.
on account of its present situation, and its
confinement in this dwelling of flesh and
blood; and the more earnest and fervent
are his aspirations and desires of being re-
leased entirely from this *bondage of corrup-*
tion, and brought into a state of happier
liberty.

Well; in the heavenly state these desires
shall be fully satisfied: when the good soul
quits the body, it shall be introduced into *this* Rom. viii.
glorious liberty of the sons of God. There- 21.
fore called by this name, [*the liberty of the*
sons of God] because none are capable of it
but the true *sons of God*; those who prove
themselves to be so, by their most perfect
resemblance of their heavenly Father in his
most glorious moral image. It will go,
with all its full bent and tendency, with all
its perfect moral force and energy, into
every act of service and obedience.

But to proceed,

4. In that happy world, the servants of
God shall serve him with the highest pleasure
and delight.

Indeed even while here, the true christian
esteems the service of God his best and most
agreeable employment. *His delight is to do the* Pf. xl. 8.
will of his God; he rejoices in the way of his

SERM. testimonies, more than in all riches. He

XX. esteems a day in God's house better than a thousand spent elsewhere: and he often finds it good to draw near to God; and is refresh-

Pf. cxix.

14.

Pf. lxxxiv

10.

Pf. lxxiii.

28.

Isa. lvi 7.

ed and comforted, and quickened in the sanctuary, and made joyful in God's house of prayer and praise. So that, sometimes, when heartily engaged in his work, he can even in this world say: "My labour is my pleasure.*" But alas! these bright intervals are very short, and but few! The clouds soon return; and the greater part of the christian's service here is not performed without difficulty, requiring attention of mind, a constant care and solicitude. *Without are*

2Cor. vii.

5.

Eph. vi.

12.

fightings, and within are fears: because his state of service here is that of a continued warfare, in which he *wrestleth not with flesh and blood only, but with principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickednesses;* and all the pleasure and joy that he has is like that of a present advantage gained, from which he must return to battle again; not the full joy of peace and final victory. So that he eats his spiritual bread with tears, and his prayers are sent up mingled with many a heavy mournful complaint, with bitter groans and sighing.

But

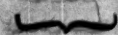
* Labor ipse voluptas.

But when once the christian shall have SERM.
got safe to the heavenly Jerusalem, and XX.
joined the perfect assembly there, his mourn-
ing seasons shall all be ended. *There shall*
be no more grief, nor crying, nor pain of Rev. xxi.
any kind; for the former things shall all be done 4. 5.
away, and he that sitteth upon the throne will
make all things new. — There the difficult,
the laborious part of their service shall be
all over. And when once the faithful ser-
vant shall have finished his trial well, by
having been faithful unto death, *he enters* Mat. xxv.
into the joy of his Lord; into his pre- 21.
sence, where there is a fulness of joy: and Pf. xvi.
all his business, all his employment there 11.
shall be such, as is best suited to that state
of perfect ease and tranquillity.

Every part of his service will be unspeak-
ably delightful in itself. If in this mixed
state the humble christian has often more
satisfaction in an hour of penitential devo-
tion, in tears of godly sorrow, than ever the
ungodly and the sinner have in their high-
est days of sun-shine, mirth and vanity;
with what transport of delight will the per-
fectly holy soul join in the worship of the
heavenly temple, where this very mournful
pleasure shall be known no more, nor ever
interrupt the transporting work of the most
exalted praise?

SERM.

XX.



And then the pleasure and delight with which these happy servants of God shall serve him above will be greatly encreased by finding themselves so perfectly ready in it, and suited to it.—The most true satisfaction which can arise in a reasonable creature must be that which springs from itself, as conscious of its growing conformity to God, and its encreasing meetness for doing all his will, in the most acceptable manner. With what joy then will they find themselves so perfectly ready for every good work? ‘How inconceivable a pleasure, (saith one) will this be! With what delight does the poor prisoner entertain himself, when his fetters are knocked off; when he is enlarged from his loathsome dungeon, breathes in a free air, can dispose of himself, and go whithersoever he pleases? The bird escaped from his cage, and mounted on the wing, free and unpinioned, how pleasantly does it range? A faint emblem this of the joy with which that pleasant cheerful note shall one day be sung and chanted forth: *Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; the snare is broken, and we are escaped!* How delightful will be the most vigorous acts of service, the most fervent unremitted diligence, when the rectified holy will concurs, with all its force and tendency?’

Howe,
Vol. I.
p. 505.

5. That

5. That which crowns all the rest is this; SERM. XX.
that there in that better state and world a-
bove, the happy servants of God shall
find their perfect and most delightful service
and worship of him to be everlasting.

Here our work, poor as it is, is often interrupted, and when best performed cannot hold long. Soon death will finish our period of service, and all our labour on earth will be then quite over. And in the mean time, we need frequent and long rests in the several parts of our service, and are obliged to long intervals between the seasons of our set worship, our public devotion.—Our sabbaths return but one day in seven; and even then our congregations and religious assemblies soon break up, and we disperse again into this world, and the affairs and concerns of time. So that, by this means, we are apt to lose too much of the influence of public ordinances, and the relish and favour of divine things.

But hereafter these faithful servants of God shall serve him in the full vigour of their powers and faculties, with the most fixed attention, with perfect liberty and freedom of spirit, and with inexpressible delight and joy, to eternity.—This is the scripture representation of the matter.—*They serve God* cap. vii.
day and night in his temple. And they are ¹⁵
joined in social worship with those glorious
creatures

SERM. creatures round about the throne, who are re-
 XX. presented as all eye and all wings (to inti-
 mate their constant as well as ready obser-
 vance of the divine commands) and as those
 who rest not day nor night, saying: *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty, which was, and is, and is to come!* And it is promised:
 Rev. iii. *Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in*
 12. *the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out.*

And O! what words can express the transports of joy that shall rise and swell in their minds: as often as they survey the splendour and grandeur of that upper temple, the blissful society met together in it, as often as they consider their most noble employment, feel the exalted pleasure that attends them in it, and the perfect rectitude of their wills, and moral dispositions for this noblest service; and then reflect: "Thus shall it be with me forever! Thus shall I always serve and worship my God! After millions of ages spent in this most delightful exercise, instead of tiring or fainting, my glory shall still be fresh in me. Thus shall I praise the Lord while I live, thus shall I sing praises to my God while I have this immortal being! I am for ever secure of this perfection of my devotion, and my supreme felicity."

Pf. cxlvi.
2.

But

But these thoughts lead me on to the SERM.
consideration of the other general head of XX.
discourse: viz.

II. To point out the honour of this service, the strength and encouragement they receive in it, and the reward of it. All which seem included in those reviving words that follow: *And they (his servants who shall thus serve him) shall see his face.*

Let us dwell a little on these pleasing thoughts.

I. There, in the heavenly world, the servants of God shall be in the most honourable station of service; for there *they shall see his face.*

They are no longer employed in distant apartments of his vast dominions, where they only hear of their Lord's commands, or receive them from others, without being favoured with a distinct view of him: but they are admitted into the number of his more distinguished servants; who stand ministering in his immediate presence, behold their King and their God without a veil, and receive his orders directly from himself. *They shall see him face to face.*—1 Cor. xiii. 12. This signifies gracious condescension on God's part, his offering his blessed face to view without a veil or a cloud drawn between; that he does not hide it, or turn it away, as here he sometimes doth, in just displeasure: and on their part,

SERM. part, their turning their face to him; that
 XX. they see him, not by casual glances, but as it
 were eye to eye; their will in every act of
 service and worship directing and commanding the eye to him, forbidding its diversion, and holding it constantly steady and intent.

And, perhaps, the glorified human nature of our Lord Jesus shall be the grand Shechinah in that heavenly temple, through which the full brightness of the face of God shall shine forth in its strongest visible glory upon all those happy servants that shall surround his throne. This looks like the meaning of that part of the description of the heavenly Jerusalem: *And the city had no need of the sun, nor of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.*

cap. xxi.
 23.

Again;

2. From *their thus seeing the face* of their Lord, these his servants shall derive constant quickening, encouragement, and encreasing strength in this their perfect service.

The eye of the master upon the servant is a certain excitement to diligence and fidelity in his work; he will never chuse to loiter, trifle, or be slothful, when he beholds his master close by him. It is true, God's eye is always upon his servants in all places; but because they cannot, in this distant

distant world, see him with eyes of flesh, SERM.
they are not so sensible of his constant in- XX.
spection as they would otherwise be. But
when they shall be admitted into his im-
mediate presence, and *see him face to face*,
that bright vision will always influence them
to an abounding zeal and diligence in the
best and most vigorous services of their most
glorious Lord. One look from his eye
will invigorate all their powers, and quick-
en them into the most lively activity.

And then their seeing the face of God,
in this most glorious manner, will be the
greatest encouragement to them to serve
him in this perfect manner. For, as it is
in consequence of his approving sentence
that they are admitted to this most honour-
able station of service in his immediate pre-
sence, so the being for ever employed un-
der the constant view of that glorious face,
wearing a perpetual smile of gracious accep-
tance and complacency in them, must afford
the noblest encouragement to these happy
servants to continue in his service, and wax
still more gratefully diligent in it, instead
of ever growing weary and fainting in their
minds. Their perceiving and feeling the
most evident and full tokens of his appro-
bation must give them continual relishes of
inexpressible pleasure; must refresh, and
cheer, and satisfy all this vast multitude of
grate-

SERM. grateful adoring spirits, and fill them with
XX. joy unspeakable.

And then this constant vision of the face of their God shall strengthen these his servants in their service of him for ever.— Here such a burst of glory would overpower them, would be too much for their faculties, would soon kill them. But there it shall animate them; it shall be nutritive of their faculties and exalted powers, and a noble support of them, preserving them in their full vigour. Then shall those words be understood and felt in the most comprehensive sense: that *the joy of the Lord is their strength*. And, *They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength*. And the longer they continue in that glorious service, the more they shall abound in it: instead of growing weak and feeble, they shall find their vigour fresh in them, by constant unremitting communications from the immediate presence of their God and Saviour; and they shall go on *from strength to strength*, while *they appear continually before him in his heavenly Zion*.

Nehem.
viii 10.
Isa. xl. 31.

Psalms
lxxxiv. 7.

3. This *seeing of the face of God* shall be the everlasting reward of these his faithful servants.

Indeed such a service, in so glorious a place, and with such a bright assembly of happy fellow-servants and worshippers may be

be thought its own reward; for it is the SERM. highest honour, and grandest dignity to XX. which such creatures as we are can be advanced. To serve the eternal God, not as slaves, but as sons; and in such a manner, dwelling near him, and being with him: what an happiness this! How gloriously disproportionate to our poor low broken services in this wretched world of ours! —And thus to be employed for ever! O Lord! thy ways are not as ours, nor are thy thoughts as ours! —But besides this, the vision of God's face in the scripture sense of that phrase implies the most compleat and perfect enjoyment of him. They shall find him their great All in all; at once the supreme immediate author and most glorious delightful object of their blessedness; their portion and everlasting felicity.

And thus have I finished this subject as I proposed; and shall now conclude it with these two reflexions.

1. Is this the perfect and glorious manner in which the true servants of God shall serve him in a future world? Let us then inquire, how we stand affected towards that perfectly blessed state, and the noble worship and employment there. Is the thought of such a state pleasing and grateful to our souls? or are we careless and indifferent to the

SERM. the account of it, unmoved and unaffected?

XX.

of things, let us ask our own hearts farther, as to the ground and sincerity of our desire. To the assurance of which, we must yet farther inquire, as to the prevailing temper and disposition of our spirits towards the service of God upon earth. Is the performance of our duty a pleasure, or an unwelcome task to us? Do we serve the Lord in uprightness and singleness of heart? Is our heart in our work, or willingly estranged from it? — How do we relish our sabbaths and sacraments? Are they esteemed the most pleasant and profitable part of all our time? or do we, in our hearts, say: *What a weariness is it? and when will the sabbath be gone?* And do we show this to be too much our temper, by our light and vain deportment in the services of the sanctuary, and our vainer conversation immediately afterwards, as if we were glad all was over? And are the houses of public diversion and entertainment habitually more grateful, than the exercises of piety and devotion? — If so, whose servants are we here? The servants of God? or of the world, and the lusts and pleasures thereof? — Let us not deceive our selves: for this we may be assured of: “That the work of heaven must be our delight now on earth,
“ or

Mal. i. 13.
Amos
viii. 5.

“or the glory and happiness of heaven SERM.
“cannot possibly be ours at last.” XX.

2. Let the faithful servants of God here learn from the prospect they have of this perfect state of service above, to do the best they can in his service below.

For the comparison we have been making of our present manner of serving God below, with that in which his saints shall serve him above, ought by no means to dishearten true christians in their station of service here, but to quicken them to do the best they can now, and to encrease their desires after that state of perfection. Do not therefore imagine, Christian, that thy religion here is to consist only in complaints of thy infirmities; much less plead them as an excuse for thy indolence and sloth, and think thy self allowed to indulge them. But consider the weakness and imperfection of thy present service as a reason for both thy humiliation and thy quickening: remembering that since we can do no more, nor better, surely we ought to exert ourselves to serve our God to the utmost of our power; especially, since he has assured us that this weak imperfect service, such as it is, shall, if sincere, be at last exchanged for that which is above. And let this thought, that we are continually drawing nearer to the end of our

G g labours,

SERM. labours, conflicts, temptations, and complaints, excite us to be more *stedfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*; for as much as we know that our poor labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. Amen.

XX.
1 Cor. xv.
58.

F I N I S.



5 JY 61

